

1489. s. 18. .



S^t John Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness

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THE
L I F E
O F
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

WRITTEN IN LATIN IN THE THIR-
TEENTH CENTURY

By S. BONAVENTURE,

AND TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

By Mr. EDWARD YATES.



L O N D O N,

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M,DCC,LXXIII.

L I F E

OF LORD AND CHANCELLOR
OF THE CHURCH

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
IN THE YEAR

OF THE REFORMATION



BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

L O R D

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

IN THE YEAR

OF THE REFORMATION

altering the tone of the same on his

AT a time when Infidelity and ~~Atheism~~ **Atheism** stalk abroad with the most barefaced arrogance, not only ridiculing the fundamentals of Christianity, but daring to deny the existence of all future eternal rewards or punishments, the miracles and mercies of our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST, and the very Being of God: it may reasonably be presumed, that no publication will be more acceptable to Christians, who have a just sense of their creation, and a due remembrance of their baptismal vows, than a series of pious meditations on the Life of our common Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; written by so eminent a hand as that of St. Bonaventure, above five hundred years since; when having no dissensions in religion to encounter with, his sole

ADVERTISEMENT, &c.

view was to help us, to moderate in such
 holy and salutary actions, as it is our greatest
 interest and duty to copy. We make use
 of the translation of Mr. Yates, whose
 style has been judged pleasing by many,
 and we have taken care to correct all
 erratas in the former edition, without
 altering the sense of the Saint or his
 Translator.

A talk abroad with the most practiced
 at Henrich I. underook this in
 of the work of the first of our
 the learned Lord and Saviour Jesus
 of our Saviour CHRIST, my intention was
 only to present you with a faithful
 copy of that life, from an authentic
 tion, supposed by some to be a Translation
 from St. Bonaventura, who have a
 just title of their creation, and a due re-
 spect to the Book was accidentally
 into my hands by those who sold devotion
 perwaded them that (if I had) it
 could not fail of meeting with all I need
 easement from the Babel's of every
 true and well-meaning Christian, dissem-
 ions in religion to encounter with his to

Am
 Now

A

ADVERTISEMENT
P R E F A C E
T O T H E
R E A D E R.

WHEN first I undertook this little Work of the **LIFE OF OUR LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST**, my Intention was, only to present you a true and faithful Copy of that *Life*, from an Obsolete Edition, supposed by some to be a Translation from *St. Bonaventure*.

This little Book was accidentally put into my Hands by those whose Devotion perswaded them, that (if re-printed) it could not fail of meeting with all Encouragement from the Public Zeal of every true and well-meaning Christian.

Ani-

PUR ELAGACIA, &c.

Measure convinced of the Reason I had to hope for Success in it, I at length, after some Deliberation, determined to undertake the re-printing it, and was fully resolved to send it forth into the World without any Alteration in the Translation, or making any other Difference than that of a small Amendment in the Stile and Orthography.

Having however duly compared it with the *Latin* Original of St. Bonaventure, and perused the whole with Attention, I found myself under the Necessity of altering my Intention in point of following the said old Edition: For though the Translator has therein mostly kept to the Text of the Saint; yet upon mature Consideration, I thought it more properly answered the End of a Collection, than that of a pure Translation: The Editor having often through the whole omitted many Passages of the Saint, and inserted others in their Room, such as were either agreeable with his own Thoughts, or collected from

PREFACE

from other Authors, who have wrote on the same Subject. This induced me to lay aside that Edition, and made me resolve upon stating no Pains to present you a faithful Translation of the pious and learned Author St. Bonaventure, on the LIFE of our LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; and at the same Time made me use my utmost Industry, without the Help of any Foreign Embellishments, to render the Style as agreeable as the Nature of the Phrase would permit me to do, without departing from the true Sense of my Author.

I thought it proper to premise this, by way of a necessary Precaution to the more unlearned, who being accustomed to the old Edition, and unacquainted with the true Reason of the Difference they may find by comparing them together, might be jealous of my having varied from the original Text, and imposed upon them one Work for another.

The

P R E F A C E

The Introduction to this spiritual Work gives an Account, first, of the devout Instance and Solicitude of the holy Angels in Heaven for Man's Restoration; thereby to stir him up to a devout Commemoration of Them, especially on that Day chiefly on which the holy Church solemnly puts us in Mind to do it.

And as this Book is divided into Chapters, according to the different Passages of our Saviour's Life, therefore one Part or other may be contemplated, as the Devotion of the Reader shall direct.

The Subject of this little Treatise may be, not only profitable and pertinent to every devout Reader, but even adapted to the different Seasons of the Year. In *Advent* may be read and devoutly considered all that Part from the Beginning to the *Nativity* of our Lord. The subsequent Part relating to the *Nativity* may be meditated on during the holy Time of *Christmas*. And the rest of the Subjects, as the holy Church makes mention of them, at different Times of the Year.

Lastly,

P R E F A C E, &c.

The Introduction to this spiritual Work gives an Account of the devout In-
-stance and Solicitude of the holy Angels in
read, shall reap any spiritual Unction or
Benefit from it, forget not in Charity, but
remember to pray for him who has taken
some Pains in giving an *English* Tongue
to this pious Work; on Purpose that you,
and all devout Souls, might reap the Be-
nefit from it, which the extensive Charity
of the Saint intends you, and was the chief
End proposed by your

Sincere and cordial Well-wisher,

EDWARD YATES.

The subject of this Treatise may
be not only profitable and pertinent to
every devout Reader, but even adapted to
the different seasons of the Year. In Ad-
-vent may be read and devoutly considered
all that Part from the Beginning to the
Nativity of our Lord. The subsequent
Part relating to the Nativity may be medi-
-tated on during the holy Time of Chan-
-cel. And the rest of the Subjects, as the
holy Church makes mention of them, at
different Times of the Year.

Lastly,

I have no doubt that the
 reader will find in this
 book many things which
 will be of service to him
 in his study of the
 history of the
 United States.
 I have endeavored to
 present a full and
 accurate account of the
 events of the
 American Revolution,
 and to show the
 influence of the
 various causes which
 led to the
 outbreak of the
 war.

EDWARD YATES.

The author of this
 book is a native of
 the State of New York,
 and has spent much of
 his life in the study
 of the history of the
 United States. He has
 written many books
 on this subject, and
 has been for many
 years a member of the
 American Historical
 Society. His works
 are highly valued by
 scholars and students
 alike.



ST. BONAVENTURE'S

P R E F A C E.



AMONG the many Panegyricks and Praises recorded of the Virtues of St. *Cecilia*, it is written: that she bore always enshrined in her Breast, the Gospel of *Christ*. The meaning of which seems to be: that, from the whole Series of our Lord's Life and Actions, therein related, she selected such Passages as most affected her with Devotion: On which, with a Heart full of Candour and Integrity, and a Mind elevated by the utmost Fervour of Attention, she fixed her Thoughts Day and Night; and when she had devoutly gone through the Whole, again reassuming them frequently, with a kind of uninterrupted Circulation of Thought, and sweetly digesting them with Dilicacy of Taste, she carefully deposited them in the Sanctuary of her Heart. The like Practice I recommend to you: As I look upon it to be the

St. BONAVENTURE's

most material Branch of Spiritual Study, and even the most beneficial of all devout Exercises; and what is most capable of leading you to the Summit of Christian Perfection. For surely the holy Life of *Christ*, not merely free from the minutest Blemish, but even divinely perfect, must be the best and only sure Fountain whence we can hope to draw the perfect Knowledge necessary ——— to arm our Breasts against the flattering, yet fleeting Vanities of the World; ——— to render us steady amidst Tribulations and Adversities; ——— and finally to preserve us from Vice, and facilitate the Possession of every Virtue. Frequent and habitual Meditations on that divine Subject being the readiest Means to introduce the Soul, as it were, into such a Kind of Familiarity, Confidence, and Love of him, as will insensibly create in it a Contempt and Dislike of every Thing else, and will effectually instruct it, both what to do, and what to avoid doing.

And First, That the Contemplation of *Christ's* blessed Life strengthens the Heart against the transient Pleasures and deceitful Vanities of the World, sufficiently appears in the sacred Virgin St. *Cecilia* already mentioned, whose capacious Heart was so filled with the divine Sentiments gathered from thence, that it had no Space left for the
entrance

entrance of vain Affections. Even amidst the Allurements of Magnificence, Dissipations of Musick, and other sensual Pleasures profusely combining, to render the Solemnity of her Nuptials the more Inviting to the Sense, her Heart, unaffected by, and and as it were, insensible of all the flattering Appearances, remained immoveably fixed on God, to whom she often recurred in these words: ‘ O Lord! Render my Body and Heart pure and undefiled, that I be not confounded.’

Secondly, That it renders us steady amidst Tribulations and Adversities, St. *Bernard* thus argues: ‘ Whence received the Martyrs their unshaken Resolutions amidst the Anxiety of their Torments, but from the sacred Wounds of *Jesus*, in which their Hearts and Affections were wholly centered? While they beheld and felt their Bodies torn and severed on the Rack, their Minds remained still cheerful and triumphant. And where can we then suppose the Soul of each glorious Sufferer to have been but in the Wounds of *Christ*, ready open for its Reception? Had it been lodged in its own Bosom, attentive to what passed within its lacerated Frame; it had been too sensible of the torturing Instrument, to remain proof against the excruciating Torments inflicted.

St. BONAVENTURE's

“ced: Their Pains had been an Overmatch
“for their Patience: They must have sunk
“under the pressing Weight, and denied
“God.” From the same divine Source not
only Martyrs, but even Confessors, Vir-
gins, and all who lead a virtuous Life, have
derived their Patience amidst Tribulations
and the various Trials of Infirmities inci-
dent to a mortal State: As may be instanced
in the glorious St. *Francis* and St. *Clare*,
who under the severe Pressure of Afflictions,
Penury, and Infirmities, were not only
patient, but joyful. The same may be
daily remarked in all devout Livers. Which
is intirely owing to the pious Meditations
on the Life of *Christ*: Which, as it were,
carry their Souls out of their Bodies to
transplant them in *Christ*.

Thirdly, That it is a powerful Check to
Vice, and greatly disposeth us to the Pos-
session of Virtue, is evident from this, that
the Perfection of all Virtues is only to be
found in the blessed Life of *Jesus Christ*.
For where else shall we find such moving
Examples, such sublime Doctrines of he-
roick Poverty, extraordinary Humility,
profound Wisdom, fervent Prayers, Obe-
dience, Meekness, Patience, and other
Virtues, as in this most holy Life?

Wherefore St. *Bernard* says, that he
“labours in vain in the Pursuit of Virtue,
“who

P R E F A C E

'who hopes to find it any where but in the
 'Lord of Virtues, whose doctrine is the
 'School of Prudence, whose Mercy is the
 'Work of Justice, whose Life is the Model
 'of Temperance, and whose Death is the
 'Pledge of Fortitude.' Whoever, there-
 fore, follows this divine Pattern, can nei-
 ther be deceived himself, nor deceive
 others. For the Soul by frequent Reflec-
 tions on his Virtues, is both animated and
 instructed in the Imitation and Pursuit of
 them; and at length becomes so habituated
 itself in Virtue, that the bare Light of it is
 sufficient to direct her Judgment in discern-
 ing Truth from Falshood; which is so true
 that many very illiterate Persons have be-
 come, by the same Means, profoundly
 versed in the most sublime Mysteries of
 God. By what other Means than that of
 a familiar and mental Conversation with
 his divine Lord, could St. *Francis* attain to
 such an eminent State of Perfection, so
 deep a Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures,
 and that discernment with which he disco-
 vered the Frauds of his spiritual Enemies,
 and baffled the Power of Vice? Hence it
 was, that he grew so passionately affected
 with the Life of *Christ*, as to render his
 own almost a Picture of it. It was that
 he copied after to the utmost of his Power, in
 the Practice of every Virtue: And *Christ*,
 at

St. BONAVENTURE's

at length, crowning his Affections with the Accomplishment of his Wishes, he became totally transformed into his Saviour by receiving the Impression of his sacred Wounds. To such an eminent State is the Soul led by meditating on the Life of its Saviour: and yet, this is but as it were, the Foundation on which the Soul rises to more sublime Degrees of Contemplation. For the Union therein to be found, purifying by Degrees, and elevating the Soul, instructs it, and renders it capacious of all divine Knowledge: But this tends not immediately to our present Purpose.

Now I propose to introduce you, gentle Reader, to the meditations on the blessed Life of our Saviour, though I could wish you a more learned and able Guide, being myself very unequal to so great a Task. However, as I conceive it to be more for your Advantage that I rather say something than to remain silent on so useful a Subject, I shall endeavour to make the best Use of my slender Ability, by discoursing in a familiar, though plain and unpolished Style: that you may the more easily comprehend the Matter here treated, and study rather to improve your Mind and Heart than flatter your Ears. It is not Elegance of Speech, but the Study of the Life of Jesus you are here to give

give Attention to. For as *St. Hieron* says
 Plain Language reaches the Heart, while
 florid Speeches stop at the Ears, which
 they flatten. Still I am in hopes that the
 Mediocrity of my Capacity will the better
 be adapted to the Sincerity of your good
 Intention. But I hope still more that if
 you are but diligent in the Exercise of this
 devout Study, that the Lord, whose Life
 is here treated, will become your Master
 and Instructor. You are not however to
 imagine that we can either meditate on,
 or recollect every Circumstance relating to
 our blessed Saviour. Nevertheless to make
 the more devout Impression upon your
 Mind, I shall relate those Things in
 the same Manner as if they really had hap-
 pened, which either have in fact, or may
 reasonably be believed to have happened,
 according to such devout Imaginations as a
 pious Mind is capable of forming. For it
 is even in the Study of Holy Scriptures
 allowable to meditate, expound, and un-
 derstand differently as we conceive most
 expedient. In this, however, all due Re-
 gard must be paid to the Truth of the Facts
 of his Life, to his Justice and divine Doc-
 trine; and nothing be inconsistent with
 Faith and good Works. Whatever there-
 fore, I shall here lay down as acted or said
 by *Christ Jesus*, which cannot be proved
 by

St. BONAVENTURE's, &c.

by Scripture to be so done or said, you are to take in no other Sense than as the Effect of a devout Meditation: that is, in other Words, take it as if I said, "meditate or consider, that *Christ* might have so said or done." If therefore you are desirous of reaping Fruit from this Work, you must earnestly endeavour by a serious Attention to be present to every thing that is here Written, said, or hinted of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. And that with the same Fervour and Devotion as if you both heard and saw them, laying aside for the Time all other Engagements and Affairs. In short, beloved Reader, I beseech you to accept in good Part the Pains I have here taken for the Honour and Praise of our Lord *Jesus*, and for your spiritual Profit as well as my own. And endeavour with all the Alacrity, Devotion, and Diligence you are Master of, to put it in Practice.

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THE
L I F E
O F
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

C H A P. I. S E C T. I.

Of the angel's solicitation for man's redemption.

MANKIND having for the long and tedious space of more than five thousand years continued in their miserable state of exile, not one of them being able to shake off the clog of original sin, and soar to his native country, Heaven; the blessed choir of angelical spirits, (effectually moved to compassion on them, and concerned at the

4 THE LIFE OF

dreadful havock sin had made among them, as well as solicitous to see the numbers of their own heavenly legions again compleated) as soon as the fulness of time was come, they resolved to renew the instances they had often before made to the Almighty Lord: Wherefore presenting themselves before the awful throne of God, with redoubled earnestness and devotion, they jointly prostrated themselves at his feet, and made the following prayer: ‘ All-merciful
 ‘ Lord! Remember how you graciously
 ‘ vouchsafed, from the inexhaustible fund
 ‘ of your goodness, to create man out of
 ‘ nothing, and to raise him above all the
 ‘ works of your sublunary creation, by en-
 ‘ riching him with the eminent gift of a
 ‘ rational soul capable of knowing you,
 ‘ and this on purpose that he might be-
 ‘ come a partaker of our felicity, and be a
 ‘ means of repairing the loss we sustained
 ‘ by the fall of our reprobate brethren.
 ‘ Yet behold, O benign Sovereign, the
 ‘ whole species lies still involved in inextric-
 ‘ cable ruin; out of which not one has been
 ‘ able to escape hither in the long space of
 ‘ many thousand years. Our enemies thence
 ‘ gather new matter of triumph: their con-
 ‘ tinual victories over them suffer not our
 ‘ ruins to be repaired by them; while the
 ‘ prison of Hell grows daily more thronged
 ‘ with

‘ with them : to what end then are they
‘ created, O Lord ? ’ “ Why are the souls,
“ that confess to you, delivered up a prey
“ to beasts ? ” Psal. lxxiii. ‘ We are not in-
‘ sensible that this severity perfectly agrees
‘ with your divine justice ; yet please, O
‘ Lord, to remember, that the time for
‘ shewing your mercy is come. If the first
‘ progenitors of that unhappy race did in-
‘ advertently transgress thy law ; yet let
‘ your mercy now repair the injury in
‘ their wretched posterity. Be mindful that
‘ you created them to your own likeness.
‘ Extend then in pity, O God, your hand
‘ to them, and replenish them with your
‘ bounty. To this end ’ “ the eyes of all
“ are bent on you, as the eyes of servants
“ on their masters,” Psal. cxxii. ‘ till you
‘ deign to compassionate mankind, and
‘ save them by a plentiful redemption.’

S E C T. II.

THE angel's address concluded, Mercy
and Peace, supporting the petition
of the angels in man's behalf, pathetically
pleaded for his redemption with the heavenly
Father : while Justice and Truth seemed to
make a vigorous opposition against it :
whence

whence (for contemplation sake) we may imagine a kind of ineffable debate to arise between them, as St. BERNARD relates in a beautiful and extensive manner. But in this, I shall be as concise as the tenor of our subject will permit me. For tho' in this treatise, I intend often to interweave his words with my own, yet as our present purpose requires us to avoid tedious prolixity, I shall differ partly in the manner of applying them. To return then to our subject, the sum of his discourse, in the place above quoted, is as follows: Mercy, in the words of the royal prophet says, "Will God reject
" man forever, or hath the Lord forgot to
" shew mercy?" Psal. lxxvi. Long and frequently importuned with these, and such like solicitations, thus at length, the Almighty may be supposed to have answered,
' Hold Mercy, before I acquiesce to your
' petitions, it becomes me, as an equitable
' judge, to hear the allegations which
' Justice and Truth have to offer against
' them.' Whereupon the two divine attributes being ready to the summons, Mercy thus resumes, ' Mankind, O Lord, stand
' in need of thy commiseration, for they
' are become wretched indeed, even extremely wretched; and the time for shewing
' pity is more than come.' Here Truth, interrupting the plea of Mercy, begins

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begins, 'It is meet O Lord, that you
 fulfil your divine word. Let ADAM die
 and all his race with him, since all in him
 impiously tasted the forbidden fruit.'
 Wherefore then, O Lord,' replies Mercy,
 wherefore do I subsist? if you forbear for-
 ever to commiserate; there is an end of
 me: this thy truth must acknowledge.'
 Yes,' rejoins Truth, 'but yet, O
 eternal Father, if prevaricating man can
 elude thy sentence, what becomes of me?
 Can I, as thou hast promised, persist to
 eternity?' Thus the divine pleaders con-
 tinuing to support their suit against each
 other, the eternal Father at length, remits
 the cause to his Son. Before whom, Mercy
 and Truth renewing their former pleas,
 Truth thus added, "I confess, O Lord,
 that the zeal which Mercy exerts in man's
 behalf is good and worthy all praise: but
 does she therein act conformable to justice
 in persuading thee rather to spare those
 prevaricators than me her sister attri-
 bute?" "Ah beloved Truth," replies
 Mercy, rather consider, that your indig-
 nant rigour spares neither man nor me:
 by refusing to commiserate him you in-
 volve me in his destruction, me your
 sister Mercy.' But Truth, unsoothed by
 all that Mercy could offer, still farther urged:
 'Thou, O Lord, art here made a party in
 this

' this cause, and therefore it highly behoves
 ' thee not to suffer the word of thy eternal
 ' father to be made void.' After this man-
 ner persisted the divine parties in opposing
 each other, till at length, all-uniting Peace
 with her heavenly voice interposing, thus
 addressed them, ' spare these disputes, Ye
 ' heavenly offspring of God. Contention
 ' suits but ill such kindred virtues.' Still
 the debate was important, and the reasons
 on both sides so strong and powerful, that
 no means appeared of reconciling Mercy and
 Truth in regard to mankind, till the divine
 and royal Judge gave * to peace, who stood
 the nearest to his awful throne, the follow-
 ing ineffable decree to read. " Whereas
 ' our eternal Father's divine offspring,
 ' Truth and Mercy, have laid before us
 ' their opposite allegations concerning the
 ' salvation or perdition of our hapless crea-
 ' ture, man: the former alledging, that, if
 ' the sentence of death passed upon Adam
 ' should be reversed, Mercy herself must
 ' be involved in the destruction of ADAM:
 ' Our divine Wisdom suggests us a medium
 ' to preserve both inviolable and uninjured.
 ' Let Death then be made a desirable good:
 ' That the apprehensions of all may be re-
 moved

* The ineffable decree of God.

‘ moved, and their ends obtained.’ No sooner was the divine decree pronounced, than all, applauding the wisdom of it, silently consented that ADAM should die, yet Death be a means of saving mercy to him. But hence a new difficulty: How, O insearchable Wisdom? How, shall Death become a desirable good to man, when the bare sound of it is sufficient to convey horror to the sense? “ Know,” answers the heavenly monarch, “ that though the death of
‘ the wicked be superlatively wretched;
‘ that of the righteous is inestimably precious, and the sure entrance to eternal life.
‘ Let one then be sought out, who, though
‘ not by nature subject to * death, will
‘ voluntarily submit to it, from a generous
‘ motive of disinterested charity. Such a
‘ one, not liable to be detained in subjection by Death, will force a passage
‘ through it and lead captivity after him
‘ to a blessed state of freedom. Here all
‘ acquiesce with pleasure to the divine proposal; yet where, say they, shall we be
‘ able to find such a one? Submissively,
‘ however, obsequious to the eternal word’s
‘ decree, without waiting a fresh reply, due
‘ adorations paid to the Almighty Majesty,
‘ both

* Death entered by sin.

both depart in search of him: Truth re-
 solving to range the earth, and Mercy the
 wide dominions of heaven, according to
 the words of the Prophet: "Thy mercy
 O Lord, is in heaven, and thy truth even
 to the clouds," Psal. xxxv. "it encom-
 passes the universe. Yet how vain, alas,
 their researches! Truth traveling round
 the world, finds no one free from guilt,
 not even the infant of a day. And Mercy
 in vain seeks, throughout heaven, one
 who has charity equal to so great an under-
 taking. Alas! all mankind are but infe-
 rior servants, and the best of them must,
 even when they act well, say from St.
 LUKE, chap. xvii. that they are but
 "unprofitable servants." As none there-
 fore could be found so abounding in cha-
 rity as to lay down their life for such use-
 less servants; it was to no purpose for
 Mercy and Truth to seek any longer.
 Hence returned to the Almighty's presence
 at the appointed time, without the desired
 success, Peace with a benevolent counte-
 nance thus prevents them. "Ah! heavenly
 sisters, know you not, or have you forgot:
 that "there is not one on earth who does
 good:" "No, not even one. Or who
 in heaven or on earth but he, whose wis-
 dom gave you the ineffable advice you are
 endeavouring to pursue, can assist you to
 affect

‘ affect it?’ this heard, the all-wise monarch
 ‘ spoke. ‘ It repents me that I made man :
 ‘ Yet, as I have made him, it becomes the
 ‘ immensity of my goodness to do satisfac-
 ‘ tion for him. Wherefore,’ calling to him
 the angel GABRIEL, ‘ Go, says he, and tell
 ‘ the Daughter of SION :’ “ Behold your
 “ king comes.”—— Thus far from St.
 BERNARD. Hence you may see of how dan-
 gerous and fatal a consequence sin has been
 and still is, and how great the difficulty of
 applying a remedy to it. To this purpose
 however, the above mentioned attributes
 seem best to accord and unite in the person of
 God the Son. For on one side, the person
 of the Father, bearing in appearance a ter-
 rible and powerful aspect, might seemingly
 give cause of apprehension for Peace and
 Mercy. On the other side, the person of
 the Holy Ghost, all bountiful and gracious,
 might seemingly give no less room for appre-
 hension to Truth and Justice. So that the
 person of the Son, between both, was wisely
 accepted as mediator in the important work.
 This however, must be understood, not in a
 strict sense, but a mystical and assumed one.
 Thus then was at length fulfilled that Pro-
 phesy of the Psalmist, “ Mercy and Truth
 “ met together, Justice and Peace kissed
 “ each other.” Psal. lxxiv.

C 2

Thus

Thus much may suffice for pious meditation on what we may devoutly conceive, might probably pass in heaven relating to man's redemption.

C H A P. II.

Of the life of the blessed Virgin Mary, and her seven petitions to God.

THE life of the holy Virgin (from whom the Son of God took flesh) will afford our devotion ample matter of meditation. You are then to know, christian reader, that at the third year of her age, she was presented in the temple a sacrifice to God; and there remained to the age of fourteen. What was her method of life in that holy sanctuary, during that space of time, we may learn from the Revelations, with which she favoured a devout votary of hers: Who (as it is believed) was the glorious St. ELIZABETH, whose solemn festival the church annually celebrates. Among the rest the following particulars are contained.

When my parents' (says our blessed Lady) ' had consecrated me in the temple; and no sooner were they departed from me, ' than

than I resolved in my own heart to chuse
 God for my father: and often and de-
 voutly ruminating what I might do to
 please God, and render myself agreeable
 in his sight, that he might vouchsafe to en-
 rich me with his grace; I began by taking
 care to be instructed in the divine laws.
 But of all the divine laws which I ob-
 served in my heart, these three were the
 first and chief: "Thou shalt love the
 Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all
 thy soul, with all thy spirit, with all thy
 strength: Thou shalt love thy neighbour
 as thyself: Thou shalt not hate thy
 enemy." These I kept in my mind;
 and immediately possessed all the virtues
 comprised in them: and thus will I have
 you do. But the soul can possess no virtue,
 that has not a cordial love for God. For
 it is from this love that flows the plenti-
 tude of all grace; without which no vir-
 tue can enter into, nor remain in the soul;
 but drops away like water, unless due ha-
 tred be conceived towards its enemies,
 that is, vice and evil habits. Whoever
 therefore is desirous of possessing and re-
 taining the grace of God must dispose
 their hearts to love and hatred. I will
 therefore, that you follow my example,
 and do as I did. I rise constantly at mid-
 night, and before the holy altar of the
 temple,

‘ temple, with all the desire, will, and affection I was capable of, and knew how to practise, I implored the grace of Almighty God to observe those three great commandments chiefly, and every other precept of his law. And thus before the sacred altar I made the following * seven petitions.

‘ I requested then *first* his grace, to fulfil the precept of charity, that is, to love him with all my heart, &c.

‘ *Secondly*, The grace necessary to love my neighbour according to his will and pleasure, and to delight in all things that please him.

‘ *Thirdly*, His assistance to hate and shun every thing displeasing to him.

‘ *Fourthly*, Humility, patience, benignity, and meekness, and every virtue that could render me agreeable in his sight.

‘ *Fifthly*, That he would make known to me the time in which that ever-blessed virgin should be born, who was to bring forth the son of God: and that he would preserve my sight that I might behold her; my tongue that I might praise her: my hands that I might minister to her: my feet that I might move in her service: and

* The seven petitions of our Lady.

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‘ and my knees that I might adore the Son
‘ of God in her womb.

‘ *Sixthly*, I implor’d his grace, to obey
‘ the precepts and direction of the priest of
‘ the temple.

‘ And *Seventhly*, That he would vouch-
‘ safe to preserve the temple and people in
‘ his holy service.’

The servant of *Christ*, when she heard
this, said: “ O most amiable lady, was not
“ you full of grace and every virtue?”
‘ Yes,’ answer’d the blessed Virgin: ‘ Yet
‘ know for certain, that I thought myself as
‘ void of merit, as full of guilt, and as un-
‘ worthy God’s favour as you. For which
‘ reason I continued thus asking for grace
‘ and virtue. And farther, however you
‘ may imagine me to have possess’d all the
‘ grace I was endow’d with, with little or
‘ no pains; yet be assured that I received no
‘ one grace, gift, or virtue from Heaven,
‘ without immense labour, incessant prayer;
‘ fervent desires, profound devotion, many
‘ tears, and much affliction: Ever saying
‘ and thinking, to the best of my knowledge
‘ and power, what was most agreeable to
‘ him. Nor did I receive any blessing from
‘ Heaven without all this, except the sancti-
‘ fying grace by which I was made holy in
‘ the womb of my mother. Know also,
‘ *adds she*, that no grace descends into the
soul,

‘ soul, but by means of prayer and mortifi-
 ‘ cation.’ However, when once we pay to
 ‘ God all the little services in our power,
 though they are but few, they are of such
 efficacy as to attract the Almighty himself
 into the soul, and with him the most ^{valuable} ~~invaluable~~
 gifts. Insomuch that the soul seems ^{to have} ~~to have~~
 measure to be carried out of itself, and for-
 gets the having done or even said any thing
 pleasing to Heaven, and becomes more un-
 worthy and contemptible in its own esteem
 than ever. Thus much may we gather from
 the above-mentioned Revelations.

St. *Hierom* however, in the account he
 gives us of her life, adds: ‘ That it was the
 ‘ constant method of the blessed Virgin to
 ‘ continue fix’d in prayer from the morning
 ‘ to the third hour. From the third hour
 ‘ to the ninth she employed herself in ma-
 ‘ nual exercises. At the ninth again she re-
 ‘ turn’d to prayer, nor suffer’d any thing to
 ‘ interrupt her devotions till call’d upon by
 ‘ the angel who attended her, to receive her
 ‘ usual necessary Refection: And even then,
 ‘ from his celestial converse, she improv’d in
 ‘ the love and service of her beloved master.
 ‘ She was ever found the first at the sacred
 ‘ vigils and watches of the temple, the most
 ‘ vers’d in the knowledge of the divine
 ‘ laws, the most profoundly practis’d in true
 ‘ humility, the most ready and harmonious
 ‘ in

in the Royal Psalmist's divine canticles, the
 most illustrious in chastity, the most inno-
 cently pure, and the most perfect in every
 virtue. She was immovably constant in
 goodness, yet was never seen or heard to
 be morose or peevish at the failings of her
 companions as were less perfect. Every
 word of her's had in it such a singular
 plenitude of grace, that something of di-
 vine appear'd in all she said. She was ever
 perseverant in prayer, and the study of
 God's laws: and ever watchful over the
 conduct of her companions, that none of
 them might exceed in speech, or break out
 into inordinate mirth, or disgust each other
 by pride or offensive behaviour. She
 was ever intent on praising God: and lest
 the greetings, which neighbourly charity
 oblig'd her to use towards those of her own
 station, should in the least diminish the
 praise due to God; her perpetual form of
 salutation was, Thanks be to God. Hence
 the laudable custom of holy men in sa-
 luting each other, to say, Thanks be to
 God. The food administer'd to her by the
 hands of the angel serv'd her for her own
 support; and she bestow'd on the poor the
 portions allotted to her by the priests of
 the temple. The angel was seen daily
 conversing with her, and obeying her, as
 if she were his beloved sister or mother.
 Thus St. Hierom.

In the fourteenth year of her age the blessed Virgin was espous'd to St. *Joseph* by divine appointment revealed to her parents, and then she return'd to *Nazareth*: concerning which you may see the particular circumstances in the legend of her birth. Such are the subjects proper to meditate on, which happen'd before the incarnation. Consider them well, and take pleasure in the contemplation of them, committing them to your memory with the utmost affection, and practise them with all diligence, as matters of the sublimest devotion. But let us now proceed to the incarnation.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the Incarnation of Christ, and the angelical Salutation of the blessed Virgin.

WHEN the fulness of time was come, and the most blessed Trinity had deliberated on the means of providing for the redemption of mankind, by the incarnation of the WORD; *Christ* resolved to take flesh of the blessed Virgin, through his immense charity with which he loved mankind. His mercy therefore moving him, having especially regard to the instances of the celestial spirits; when the blessed Virgin was return'd

THE LIFE OF

In the twentieth year of her age the
holy virgin was betrothed to St. Joseph by
the angel of the Lord, and then
conceived and bore a son, whom she
called Jesus.



Soulin. delin.

Pemberton. sculp.

THE SALUTATION

[illegible]

to *Nazareth*, Almighty God call'd to him the angel *Gabriel*, and said to him; 'Go to our best beloved daughter *Mary*, espous'd to *Joseph*, the dearest to us of all our creatures, and tell her that my son delights in her form, and hath chosen her for his mother. Request her to receive him joyfully: for I have decreed to save mankind by her means, and to blot out of my memory the injury they have done me.'

And here (gentle reader) let me once more repeat my former advice: Be mindful and take such notice of what you read as to render yourself as if it were present to every passage herein related. But, particularly in this place, fix God before your imagination, in the best manner a corporeal being is capable of conceiving an idea of his incorporeal substance. Conceive him; that is, as a mighty sovereign, seated on his awful throne, the paternal and benign affability of whose majestie countenance spoke in him a disposition towards reconciliation, or rather reconciliation itself: Imagine him, I say, thus disposed to utter the above-mentioned words, while *Gabriel*, with serene and chearful aspect, prostrate on his knees, in a devout and reverent posture listens attentive to the divine embassy. That received, away the angelic messenger hastens from the celestial regions, and in the borrowed dress of human

likeness, quick as thought, presents himself before the holy Virgin Mary, in the inmost recess of her little habitation. Yet not in expedition was his flight, but that the blessed Trinity, preventing their embassador, were in the happy mansion before him.

For this you must take along with you; that though the person of the Son alone was made man, yet the whole sacred Trinity was concerned in his incarnation. * The Father and the Holy Ghost co-operating alike in this august and unutterable mystery. Here then be specially attentive, and as if present to every thing that is said and done; endeavour to comprehend every circumstance that passes. Oh, what scope may not this subject afford your devout meditation! What reflections may you not gather from that little mansion where such personages are assembled, and such ineffable mysteries wrought by them. For though the sacred Trinity be undoubtedly always every where present; yet in this place, at this juncture, it was present in a more singular and ineffable manner than usual, on account of the supernatural and unpeakable work then and there effected. The angel *Gabriel* then arrived at the holy mansion, and entering to

* The incarnation was a work of the whole Trinity, or three divine persons.

the blessed Virgin, thus the faithful proxy began his message: "Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women." To which, not a little disturbed, she made no answer. Her disturbance however, proceeded not from any guilty disorder within her; neither could it be occasioned by the angelical vision, such kind of visions being, from their frequency, become familiar to her. But, to speak in the words of the Evangelist, "She was disturbed at the angel's speech." That is, puzzled in thought at the novelty of this salutation, so unlike his usual manner of greeting her. Nor could the humble Virgin be other than disturbed at the triple commendation included in his angelical salutation. To hear herself commended, for that she was full of grace, that the Lord was with her, that herself was blessed above the rest of her sex, was more than one so rich in humility could hear without a blush of concern. Her discomposure then was wholly the effect of a virtuous and becoming bashfulness; accompanied with a fear of too easily giving into the belief of what she heard. Not that she in the least mistrusted the angel's veracity; but because 'tis ever the faculty of the truly humble to tend to perfection, by examining into, and magnifying their defects while they either remain wholly insensible of any merit

merit in themselves, or see it thro' the lessening end of the perspective. Thus, as becomes a prudent, fearful, and modest Virgin, our blessed lady remained silent, returning no answer to the angelical salutation; as if not knowing what to reply. Learn from her example the study and practice of silence: a virtue of the greatest utility to such as are endowed with it. The vice contrary to which is so odious in all, but especially in women, and more in young ones and virgins; that this sacred patern of modesty could not prevail on herself to make any answer till she had heard the angel twice utter his mysterious message; nor even then could she have resolved to break through her wonted silence, but that the sacred messenger, apprized of the cause of her despondency, encouraged her in the following words: 'Fear not, *Mary*; nor be concerned at the encomiums I render you. 'Why should your modesty blush to receive the praises justly due to you? You are not only full of grace yourself, but even born to be the means of restoring all mankind to the grace of God, which they had lost. 'For behold you shall conceive and bring forth the Son of the Most High, who has chosen you to be an instrument of the salvation destined to all who put their trust in him.' This said, the blessed virgin, waving the

the subject of her praises, was solicitous to know the manner in which all this could be done; which she could not but be anxious about, on account of her virginity, which she was resolved never to part with. Wherefore she requested the angel to acquaint her with the manner of the conception, in the following words: 'How shall this be effected upon me who have dedicated myself to God in a vow of perpetual virginity?' 'It will be done (replied the angel) by the singular and ineffable operation of the Holy Ghost, by whose power you will be replenished, and conceive without prejudice to your virginity: and therefore will your son be called the son of God. For nothing is to him impossible. In proof of which know that by the same power of God, your kinswoman *Elizabeth*, tho' old and barren, is now six months gone in her pregnancy of a male child.'

Here conceive yourself in the divine presence, and contemplate how the blessed Trinity, graciously waiting the answer and consent of their beloved daughter, were delighted to behold her graceful decency of behaviour, and the modesty of her expressions. With what wisdom and attention the angel employs his heavenly eloquence to persuade her, and with what sweetness, reverence, and affability he bends before her as

as his awful mistress, faithfully executing his
 will, and obediently performing her duty
 to reply, that she was not worthy to receive her
 dignity, but his will was that she should
 be his. And thus, with a humble and
 joyful heart, she consented to the will of
 the Lord, and the will of the Father, who
 had chosen her for his spouse. The message
 being closed by these attributes wholly to
 the divine grace, the wonderful conceivings
 bestowed on her, though such as were ne-
 ver given to any mortal besides. *Consider*
 attentively this, and learn from
 so great a pattern, to behave with modesty
 and humility: without which purity of
 self is of little signification. But to return
 to our subject. The blessed Virgin, after hearing the fore-
 mentioned words of the angel, with pru-
 dence equal to the rest of her conduct, gave
 her consent: and (as her revelations declare)
 kneeling with her hands joined in a devout
 posture, said; Behold the handmaid of
 the Lord. Be it done to me according
 to thy word. In the same individual in-
 stant the Son of God passed into the
 Virgin's womb, took flesh of her, and still
 remained in the essence of his Father.
 Chastity without modesty and humility is of little esteem.

J E S U S C H R I S T. 28

However you may for piety's sake imagine, that the Son of God undertaking this laborious embassy of obedience, reclined and recommended himself to the Father, and that in the same instant his soul was created and infused into the womb of his Mother: so that tho' he afterwards grew in the womb as naturally as other children are wont to do: yet he received not like them any increase of faculties in his soul, or diversity in limbs; being then as perfect God and perfect man, as wise and powerful as he is now. But to return to the angel: *Gabriel* to accompany the blessed Virgin in her devotion, knelt awhile; and then, rising, profoundly bowed himself to her in a respectful manner to take his leave, after which he vanished immediately. The blessed Virgin now alone all its raptures, and more than usually inflamed with the love of God, began to be sensible of her pregnancy. Wherefore throwing herself again upon her knees, she returned God thanks for so great a favour, and with most humble and fervent instance beseeched him to vouchsafe her the instructions necessary to render her capable of acting her part by him free from any defect or imperfection.

Meditate then on the greatness of this day's solemnity. Let your heart rejoice; and the day be crowned with holy mirth: a day hitherto unheard of since the beginning of

time: a day devoted to the honour of God the Father, who celebrates the nuptials of his Son, espoused to human nature which he has inseparably united to himself. A day sacred to the wedding of the divine Son, and to his entrance into the virginal womb, thro' which he is to pass into the world. A day solemn to the Holy Ghost by whose singular and wonderful co-operation the work of the incarnation was effected; and whose extraordinary benignity, this day, began to shew itself to mankind. A day of glory to our blessed Lady, who on the same was acknowledged and assumed by the Father for a Daughter; by the Son for a Mother; by the Holy Ghost for a Spouse. A day of rejoicing to the whole heavenly choir, on account of the work of their reparation commencing from it; but more especially to mankind on account of their salvation, redemption and reconciliation; for on this day properly was the whole human nature exalted and deified. On this day the Son submitted to the new command of his Father in the work of our salvation. On this day, coming forth from the highest heavens, he exulted like a giant in the race, and centered in the virginal garden of his mother's womb. On this day he was made one of us, and becoming our brother, he began to sojourn among us. On this day the true light descended from
heaven

heaven to expel away our darkness, and disperse the clouds of our ignorance. On this day the bread of life, which enlivens the world, was truly perfected in the sacred enclosure of the virginal womb; and the word was made flesh to dwell amongst us. *Lastly*, On this day the long-continued cries of the holy patriarchs and prophets were heard, and their fervent desires fully accomplished. They cried aloud, with earnestness not to be expressed, and said, "Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth." *Isa.* "xvi." "Drop dew ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just." *Chap.* "xlv." "Would, O God, thou wouldst burst the heavens asunder and descend." *Chap.* "lxix." "Lord, incline thy heavens, and descend." *Psal.* "cxliii." "Shew us thy face, and we shall be saved." *Ibid.* "lxxix." These, with infinite others of like nature (to be seen in holy writ) were their repeated instances for the approach of the solemn day, which they so ardently expected. This day gave the first beginning to every joyful solemnity; and is the only true source of all our real happiness. For though hitherto Almighty God has been justly offended against mankind, for the transgression of their first progenitors; yet from this time his anger against them shall cease at the sight of his only Son made man for their redemption.

Hence is this day so justly filed the fulness of time; that is, a time of grace and redemption to man. And hence also may we deem the wonderful greatness of this most solemn and ineffable mystery, where all is profitable and sweet, all is gay and decent, all is pleasing and desirable; in a word, where all is so sublimely sacred, that it requires our inmost devotion to treat of it, our purest transports to solemnise it, and our profoundest veneration to adore it. Let such then be the heads of your meditation; make them the scope of all your pleasure; and chuse them for your frequent and favorite amusement. For who knows but the Lord may recompence your pious practice with more ample scenes of heavenly knowledge?

C H A P. IV.

Our blessed Lady visits her cousin St. Elizabeth, in whose house the Magnificat and Benedictus were composed.

OUR blessed Lady, having conceived by the Holy Ghost, and the incarnation of the Son of God being fully accomplished in her sacred womb, recalling to mind what the angel had told her concerning her cousin Elizabeth,

Elizabeth, she resolved to visit her ; and this not merely to congratulate with her on her happy pregnancy, but rather to assist her at her approaching delivery. Wherefore, in company with her beloved spouse St. *Joseph*, she immediately set out on her journey from the little city of *Nazareth*, towards the house of St. *Elizabeth*, which was near *Jerusalem*, and about seventy miles distant from *Nazareth*. Neither the length of the journey, nor the labours of the way could deter her from her pious resolution ; but without delay she went on with all speed, that she might not appear long abroad. Nor was she, like other women in her condition, in the least burdened by the divine infant she bore in her womb : No, her sacred load was no incumbrance to her. And now by the way accompany in mind this blessed couple. The ever-glorious virgin, queen of heaven and earth, with her beloved spouse proceeds on her journey ; not on a pampered horse, or gilded carr, not escorted by a military band of armed soldiers, not triumphant amidst a pompous crowd of nobles, not surrounded with a glittering tribe of courtly damsels. Poverty, humility, modesty, with every graceful virtue, were all their train. The Lord of Hosts indeed was her inseparable companion, attended by his glorious court, far outshining all the splendor of the
vainly

vainly: pompous sons of earth. Come at length to their journey's end, she entered the house of *Zachary*, and finding there her cousin *Elizabeth*, saluted her, saying; Hail my dear cousin *Elizabeth*. *Elizabeth* vehemently animated by the Holy Ghost, with transports of joy, strait arose, and tenderly embracing her, cried aloud: Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord doth come to visit me? Luke i. The words of the salutation were no sooner graciously uttered by our blessed Lady, than they pierced even to the bowels of *St. Elizabeth*, inflaming both mother and son with the divine spirit. Nor was the mother inflamed before her son, but he, first replenished himself, replenished also his parent; not operating any thing new within her, but rather meriting that something divine should be wrought within her soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost: Inasmuch that the grace of the Holy Paraclete was more abundantly diffused in him, and he first was sensible of its blessed effects. Thus, as she outwardly perceived the presence of the holy virgin, he inwardly was affected by the approach of his Lord. Wherefore he extolled for joy, and the prophetied. Consider hence of how great force and efficacy must

the words of the blessed Virgin be, that the Holy Ghost should deign to communicate himself at the bare utterance of them. For herself was so copiously filled with him, that the same divine spirit in and through her, replenished others. The Virgin Mary, after hearing the salutation of *Elizabeth*, replied thus to her; My soul doth magnify our Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, with the rest of that divine canticle. This ended, they both prepare to sit down, when a holy contention arose between them, not occasioned by ceremonious insincerity, but from an inborn humility. The sacred Virgin, greatest in that virtue, as well as in dignity, would have seated herself below *Elizabeth*, at her feet; and *Elizabeth*, conscious of the majesty of her guest, would have placed herself beneath hers. But at length, both modestly yielding to each other, they seated themselves together side by side. The pious debate was succeeded by equally pious greetings, and mutual interrogations concerning the mystery of each other's conception, which each to the other revealed, giving the glory of it to God, and crowning the day, with divine praises and thanksgiving for the sovereign and ineffable blessings received. Our blessed Lady continued with *Elizabeth* the space of three months, helping and assist-

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ing her as far as she was able, with all devotion, humility, and veneration, feeling to forget the greatness of her own dignity, and that she was the chosen mother of God, and the sovereign queen of the world. Oh, what a heavenly house; what blessed chambers! What an immaculate bed was that, which contained such sacred parents, pregnant with such celestial infants; *Mary* and *Elizabeth*, *Jesus* and *John*, guarded and attended by those truly great and venerable men, *Joseph* and *Zachary*. When *Elizabeth's* time was expired, she was happily delivered of a son, which our blessed lady received in her arms, and carefully swaddled; performing, with virginal tenderness, the necessary little offices suitable to the occasion. The infant, as if acquainted with the majesty of his sacred nurse, fixed his eyes steadfastly on her, so taken with her beauty, that when she delivered him again to his mother, he still looked towards her as if he could take delight in her alone. While she, on the other side, continued graciously playing with him, embracing him, and cherishing him with her heavenly lips. What excess of honour was not this for *St. John*? What pure mortal, besides himself, was ever blessed with such a nurse? Yet this is not the only great privilege he enjoyed. Many others might be named, were they not foreign to our present purpose.

On

On the eighth day the child was circumcised and called John. Then was the mouth of Zachary opened, and he prophesied, saying, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, thus were the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*, those two sublimely beautiful canticles, composed in this house. In the mean time, while the latter was singing, our blessed Lady, virgin-like, to avoid being gazed on by the men who were present, on account of the ceremony, kept retired in a secret part of the chamber, where, unseen, she could hear what passed; and there devoutly listened to the prophecies uttered concerning her divine son, carefully and wisely depositing the whole in her heart. At length, taking leave of Elizabeth and Zachary, and giving her blessing to John, she returns to her own humble habitation at Nazareth. Here again, devout reader, contemplate her poverty in another shape. She returns home: But to what home? To a home unprovided with meat or drink: to a home destitute of every necessary of life. But this was a trifling uneasiness, had she either estate or money, or other means to procure her a cheerful residence there. But, alas! that she is a stranger to. She has remained now three months with her relations, probably in no mean circumstances: and yet now, not with regret, but cheerfully of her own accord, she re-

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treats to her former state of poverty, and to gain a narrow subsistence with her own hands. Oh! Christian soul, compassionate such greatness in such great distress; and learn from so great an example, the poverty of spirit you ought to have.

C H A P. V.

St. Joseph thought of dismissing the blessed Virgin; and God suffers his beloved to be afflicted.

WHEN our blessed Lady and her spouse had been some time at home, and Jesus had visibly grown in his mother's womb, St. Joseph could not but perceive the pregnancy of this heavenly parent; which, with the consciousness of his own purity, stung his soul to the quick with immoderate grief.

If it should seem strange to you that Christ would have his mother espoused, notwithstanding she was to remain always a virgin; there are three very natural reasons to be assigned. *First*, That her pregnancy might not subject her to infamy. *Secondly*, That the care and company of a man might guard her from insults. *Thirdly*, That the veil of
mar-

marriage might elude the devil's enquiry into the mystery of the incarnation.

Joseph then frequently observed his spouse, but never without grief and confusion; nor could he help shewing his concern in the disturbance of his countenance; often turning his eyes from her as from a criminal, whom he suspected of adultery. Hence learn how God permits those whom he loves, to be afflicted in this life, and how he prepares them for the crown of glory, by means of temptation.

Amidst his concern, however, he was not so lost to moderation, but that he was contriving how to dismiss her privately, without hurt to her person or reputation. Here it may be truly said that his praise is in the gospel: it is there said that "he was a just man:" and great indeed does his virtue appear on this occasion. For though commonly speaking, the greatest provocation a man has to shame, grief, and excess of madness, is the infidelity of his wife; yet he knew so well to moderate his passion by virtue, that he would not so much as accuse a wife whom he thought guilty; but chose patiently to stifle the injury, and rather to conquer by goodness, than overcome by revenge: and, being too just not to desire to separate from a criminal, he was likewise too merciful not to spare the reputation of one, who was to be pitied if frail.

Nor was our blessed Lady without her share of tribulation: she could not but observe his disturbance, and could not but be disturbed with it herself. Nevertheless she humbly kept peace, and concealed the gift of God, rather chusing to be reputed a sinner, than to reveal the divine secret, and say that of herself which might be discredited as an empty boast, contrived to palliate a real offence. All her recourse was to God, beseeching him to apply his healing balm of comfort to the troubled souls of herself and spouse. Hence gather what inexpressible grief and anxiety these two blessed personages were in! But the same Lord, who wisely permitted them to be tried, mercifully relieved them both in time of need, sending an angel to *Joseph* in a dream, to inform him that his spouse had conceived by virtue of the Holy Ghost, and that he should lay aside all thoughts of leaving her; and ordering him to distrust her no more, but to remain with her in all love, peace, and alacrity. Thus, their disquiet ceasing, a sovereign consolation took place in their breasts. And the same would happen to us, if we knew how to arm ourselves with patience in the day of trial. For it is a never-failing effect of the divine bounty to calm the breasts of such as behave with courage in the tempest of affliction. Nor ought we in the least

to doubt it; for he is too tender of his elect to suffer them to undergo the least tribulation but what tends to their advantage.

St. *Joseph*, after this, enquired modestly into the particulars of this miraculous conception, which the humble Virgin faithfully related to him: and he remained thenceforward with his blessed spouse with the utmost joy and content. Thus both jointly rejoiced in their common poverty; he taking the tenderest care of her, and cherishing her with chaste affection; and she honouring him with modest confidence and spotless love.

In the mean time, *Jesus* remained enclosed in his mother's womb, like other children during the space of nine months, patiently and benignly waiting the due time. Reflect then, and compassionate him, who, for your sake, reduced himself to so abject a state of humiliation. How carefully then ought we to study to secure to ourselves the possession of this amiable virtue! And how little does it become us to follow our ambition, and to swell with the vain desire of reputation and fame, when the Lord of Majesty condescended to stoop to so humble a state! Can we ever make a sufficient acknowledgment to him for this second proof he gives us, in this tedious imprisonment, of the excess of his love for us? At least, let us make him a cordial acknowledgment of it, and with the
utmost

utmost fervour of our hearts, return him thanks for having chosen us from among the rest of Christians to make him the slender retribution of retreating from the vanities of the world, to attend to his service. It is true, we owe it wholly to the gift of his divine grace, not to any merit of ours; and yet he is pleased to look upon it as highly acceptable and grateful. Nor ought a christian's retreat to be deemed a punishment, but a safeguard. For, being safely placed within our pious retirement, the impoisoned darts, or tempestuous waves of this profligate world, in vain attempt to reach us, unless we rashly expose ourselves to them. Let us then, with all our power, and with the greatest purity of heart, endeavour to enjoy the blessing, by locking up our thoughts, and abstracting our minds from all that is transitory. For little will it avail for the body to be separated from worldly commerce, while the mind or heart remains attached to it.

Learn likewise to compassionate our Lord *Jesus* for this, that from the moment of his conception to that of his death, his sufferings were continual, inasmuch as he knew, that his divine Father, whom he infinitely loved, was, and would be dishonoured and postponed to the meanest of his creatures; and inasmuch as he saw those unhappy souls (which

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(which were created to his own likeness, and which he compassionally loved) miserably and almost universally plunge themselves in their own damnation. And his affliction and torture was so much superior to his bodily sufferings, as it was the cause of them. For the latter he submitted to, purely to remove the former. What plentiful and rich provisions of spiritual food are here laid before you for contemplation? Taste them then; and, if you wish to relish perfectly the sweetness of them, partake of them with frequency, diligence, and devotion.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

THE term then of nine months, from the time of the conception of our blessed Redeemer, being near expired, an edict was published by the Emperor *Augustus Caesar*, throughout all his dominions, whereby he ordered all his subjects to repair to the respective places of their birth, there to have their names enrolled. In conformity to which, *Joseph*, being a native of *Bethlehem*, prepared to go thither: and perceiving that the time drew near for his beloved spouse to bring forth her blessed Son, he resolved upon taking

taking her along with him. Here a second time our blessed Lady undertakes a fatiguing journey: the city of *Bethlehem* being within five or six miles of *Jerusalem*, and near seventy distant from *Nazareth*. All they took with them was an ox and an ass, with which they travelled on in the lowly appearance of such who deal in that kind of animals. Come at length to the city of *Bethlehem*, they found there so great a multitude of people, who had resorted thither from all parts, on the same occasion, that, by reason of their extreme poverty and distress, they found no reception for themselves in the inn. Here let tenderness excite you to compassion towards the august personage of this young and delicate Virgin. Consider her at the age of fifteen, wearied with the labours of a tedious journey, confused, terrified and abash'd, amidst a crouded populace: she seeks, to no purpose, a place of rest; and, every where refused admittance for herself and spouse, is at last reduced to recur for shelter to a homely shed, the usual refuge of persons surpris'd by sudden storms of rain. In this place we may suppose *St. Joseph*, who was by profession a carpenter, might probably have made a kind of partition, or small enclosure for themselves, in which he fixed a rack and manger for the conveniency of their beasts. And now let me earnestly in-

treat

treat you to be seduously attentive to every thing that passes, concerning this subject, chiefly because what I am now going to relate, I had from a devout and holy man of undoubted credit, to whom I believe it was revealed by the blessed Virgin herself.

The expected hour of the birth of the Son of God being come, on Sunday towards midnight the holy Virgin, rising from her seat, went and decently rested herself against a pillar she found there: *Joseph* in the mean time, sat pensive and sorrowful; perhaps, because he could not prepare the necessary accommodations for her. But at length, he arose too, and taking what hay he could find in the manger, he diligently spread it at our Lady's feet, and then modestly retired to another part. Then the eternal Son of God, coming forth from his mother's womb, was without hurt or pain to her, transferred in an instant from thence, to the humble bed of hay, that was prepared for him at her feet. His holy Mother, hastily stooping down, took him up in her arms, and tenderly embracing him laid him in her lap; then through instinct of the Holy Ghost, she began to wash and bath him with her sacred milk, with which she was most amply supplied from Heaven: this done, she took the veil from off her head, and wrapping him in it, carefully reposed him in

the manger. Here the ox and the ass, kneeling down, and laying their heads over the manger, gently breathed upon him; as if endowed with reason, they were sensible, that through the inclemency of the season, and his poor attire, the blessed infant stood in need of their assistance to warm and cherish him. Then the holy Virgin throwing herself on her knees, adored him, and rendering thanks to God, said: "My Lord
 "and heavenly Father, I return thee most
 "cordial thanks, that thou vouchsafed of
 "thy bounty to give me thy only Son; and
 "I praise and worship thee, O eternal God,
 "together with thee, O Son of the living
 "God, and mine."

Joseph likewise paid him adoration at the same time; after which he stripped the ass of his saddle, and separating the pillion from it, he placed it near the manger for the blessed Virgin to sit on: but she, seating herself with her face towards the crib, made use of that homely cushion only to lean on. In this posture, the Queen of Heaven remained some time immoveably, keeping her eyes and affections steadily fixed on her beloved Son. Thus far of the above-mentioned revelations.

After that our blessed Lady had revealed this to her devout votary, she disappeared, and there remained with him an angel of
 God,

God, who spoke many great things to her sacred praise: and the same were again related to me, which I am neither capable of repeating nor retaining.

You have hitherto, christian reader, been present at the sacred birth of the Son of God, and beheld the happy delivery of the Queen of Heaven, and may have discovered in both these mysteries, the true practice of strict poverty, in the extreme penury and want of many things necessary. This most sublime virtue the Lord of heaven and earth first brought to its true lustre. This is that evangelical pearl, to obtain which, we must spare no cost, but must purchase it at the expence of all we have. This is the first and sure foundation necessary to support the whole spiritual fabrick. For the soul being here clogged with the weight of temporal goods, is thereby rendered incapable of raising itself on high, and freely ascending to God. In relation to this St. Francis thus says; 'You are to know, Brethren, that poverty is the spiritual way that leads to salvation, as it were, the nutrimental sap of humility, and the source of all perfection; the fruit of which is concealed from and unknown to many. It ought then to be a subject of confusion to us that we endeavour not with all our strength to embrace it, but on the contrary, load our-

‘selves with the sur-charge of many super-
 ‘fluous and unnecessary things,’ when the
 Lord of heaven, and the blessed Virgin his
 Mother, were with the greatest perfection
 most strict observers of it. Hence St. *Bernard*
 says, ‘The practice of this virtue is
 ‘a jewel which the facility of obtaining has
 ‘rendered of little value in the esteem of
 ‘mankind. The Son of God being desi-
 ‘rous of this virtue, descended from Heaven
 ‘among us, that he might become capable
 ‘of practising it himself, and of rendering
 ‘it dear to us by the esteem he set upon it.
 ‘Embellish thy heart then as a worthy sanc-
 ‘tuary of thy heavenly spouse, with the
 ‘virtues of a profound humility and a
 ‘strict poverty: these are the swaddling
 ‘clothes he takes greatest delight in, and
 ‘these he prefers’ (as the blessed Virgin wit-
 ‘nesses) ‘to the mantles of the richest bro-
 ‘cades. Adorn thy soul with them O
 ‘christian reader! and make a sacrifice to
 ‘God of the vanity of pompous attire, bet-
 ‘ter suiting the pride of heathens, than the
 ‘humble profession of christians.’ Thus far
 St. *Bernard*. And again in his sermon on
 the nativity, he says; ‘Almighty God at
 ‘length comforts his people. Would you
 ‘know who are his people? Hear then the
 ‘man according to God’s own heart:’ “To
 “thy care,” says he, “the poor is com-
 “mitted,

“mitted,” Psal. 9. And as Christ adds in
 the gospel, “Wo unto you that are rich ;
 “for you have received here your conso-
 “lation,” Luke 2. ‘And how indeed can
 ‘they expect from him any comfort, who
 ‘have placed their comfort else-where? the
 ‘tender infancy of *Jesus Christ* is no com-
 ‘fort to the loquacious and evil promoters
 ‘of idle discourse ; his tears convey no
 ‘comfortable harmony to those who are in-
 ‘clined to inordinate laughter and trivial
 ‘mirth. They, whose glory is to shine in
 ‘gay apparel, receive no comfort from the
 ‘poverty and meanness of his attire, nor
 ‘does his humble stall, and homely man-
 ‘ger, contribute the least consolation to
 ‘such, whose ambition is to fill the first
 ‘seats, and hold the chiefest dignities in
 ‘church or state.’ The joyful tidings of the
 eternal light, being sprung forth, was first
 carried to the poor shepherds, who were
 carefully watching their flocks, and it was
 said, ‘That unto them a Saviour was born ;
 ‘that is, unto the poor, the industrious and
 ‘the labouring ; not unto you, O rich,
 ‘who lulled with ease, and swelled with
 ‘power and plenty, have here your fill of
 ‘consolation.’ Thus *St. Bernard*.

In this same nativity of the Son of God, we
 may likewise contemplate a most profound
 humility which is evidently remarkable,
 both

both in the Mother and her blessed Son. They disdained not a stall for their habitation, a wad of hay for their bed, dumb creatures for their companions; with every thing about them that seemed lowly, mean and contemptible: each of them, ever with the greatest perfection, practised this virtue, and in every, the most minute action of their whole lives strongly recommended it to us. Let us then, by serious endeavours, apply ourselves to the study of it, and be earnestly solicitous of embracing it, because without it there is no salvation. None of all our actions can be pleasing to God, if joined with pride: For, according to St. *Augustine*, pride was the occasion of that unhappy change among the angelical spirits, transforming them from angels of light into devils; whereas humility; raising mankind above their nature, transformed them unto the state of angels. Hence St. *Bernard* makes the following Query: "What ought mankind to be, whose happy lot is to repair the vacant seats of the reprobate angels?" Pride once invaded that heavenly kingdom, it shook its walls, and in great measure, partly undermined them. What then follows from hence, but that so pestiferous a vice is become odious to that city, and the worst of all abominations? Be assured, brethren, that he, who spared not the angels

angels for their pride, will not fail severely to chastise mankind: For he never acts inconsistently, but is perfectly conformable in all his works.

Lastly, Contemplate in this divine child and his sacred parent, but more especially in the infant *Jesus*, that more than ordinary anguish which piercingly affected their tender hearts. Concerning which St. *Bernard* again says: 'The Son of God being to be born, in whose power it was to chuse whatever time he pleased, made choice of that time which was most afflicting to sense and tormenting to flesh; especially to a tender infant, the son of a poor and distressed mother, who had scarce clothes wherewith to cover him, and no better cradle than a manger to lay him in: and notwithstanding the great necessity there was for them, we find no sort of mention made of warm furs, or downy mantles. And again, *Christ*, who cannot possibly be mistaken, chose that which was most disagreeable to the flesh: It is a consequence therefore unquestionable, that this in itself is most eligible, most advantageous, and infinitely preferable to all other things; and whoever should endeavour to persuade, or teach the contrary, ought to be looked upon as no better than a public dangerous impostor; and as such to be shunned and avoided by every

‘ every christian, who places his chiefest interest in his salvation.’ And again, ‘ He (says the Saint) ‘ was a long time before foretold by the prophet *Isaiah*, to be a child, “ that should know how to refuse evil and chuse good,” *Isa.* 7. ‘ It is therefore an evident truth, that the pleasures of the flesh are evil, and afflictions are good; for this, that the eternal wisdom, and the infant word in human flesh, made choice of the latter preferable to the former.’ Thus far St. *Bernard*. Go thou and do the same from so great an example: but with discretion however, so as not to exceed the bounds of your own station. Much more might be said concerning these virtues, but let us now return to the little mansion of the nativity.

The Son of God being now born, the innumerable multitude of celestial spirits, which were there assisting, paid devout adoration to their God; and forthwith hastened to the shepherds, about a mile distant from *Bethlehem*, and related to them the birth of our *Lord Jesus*, with the time and place when and where it was effected. Thence, with joyful acclamations, singing canticles of praise and glory, with all speed they ascend the celestial regions, carrying to their fellow citizens, the same joyful news of their Lord’s nativity. Wherefore the whole court of
Heaven,

Heaven, in raptures of joy at the auspicious tidings, celebrated the sacred mystery with the utmost solemnity: And due thanks being paid to the Almighty Majesty of God the Father, for the great goodness and omnipotence he had manifested in this work, they all successively, according to the different orders of their heavenly hierarchy, descend to behold the lovely and gracious countenance of their Lord, their King, and their God; and devoutly and reverently adoring him, and rendering all due and profound respect to the blessed Virgin Mother; they filled the air with sweet and melodious harmony of canticles of praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. And what one among them, having received the glad some news, could have remained in Heaven, nor descended obsequiously to visit their Lord thus humbled, thus reduced to the lowest condition upon earth? None of them all could be capable of so great an arrogance. And therefore the Apostle says, that "when the Father of Heaven brought his first begotten Son into the world, he said, that all his blessed angels should worship him," Heb. i. This to me is a most pleasing subject of meditation; whether it happened exactly as here related or not.

To the angels succeeded the shepherds, who came in their turn to pay their homely,

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but

but not less welcome homage; which done, brimful of joy, which the devout practice of our known duty inspires, they departed, but not without having first related all that the angels had said to them. The blessed parent observing diligently all that was said of her divine infant, and keeping a pleasing record of it within her own breast. Thou too, O christian loiterer! throw thyself on thy knees, and in atonement for thy past neglects, most cordially worship the Lord thy God, devoutly greet his holy Mother, and reverently salute the holy and venerable St. *Joseph*. Then in spirit tenderly kiss the feet of the infant *Jesus*, humbly extended on a bed of hay; and earnestly and devoutly request him of our blessed Lady, humbly entreating her to vouchsafe to permit you to take him: receive him into your arms, embrace him with tender affection, attentively contemplate the sweetness of his sacred features, and with profoundest respect salute him often, salute him tenderly, placing all your confidence in his goodness, and all your delight in his conversation. This you may boldly presume to do though a sinner, because he came into the world to sinners to work the salvation of sinners; and after having a long time conversed among sinners with all humility and meekness, he made himself the food of sinners. His divine bounty therefore will readily

dily grant you this favour, as often as your devotion shall lead you to require it. Neither will he deem it an effect of your presumption but a proof of your love: let not his goodness, however, lessen the fear and reverence with which you ought to approach him; but reflect that he is the holy of holies, and awed by that reflection treat him with the respect becoming him. When you have contemplated him sufficiently, restore him again to his Mother, and learn from her how to use him. See with what care, caution, and prudential tenderness she executes her charge, suckles him, nurses him, and performs every other little office as occasion requires. Be mindful often to meditate upon these subjects, take a pleasure and delight in them, and with all the devotion you are master of, endeavour to shew your desire of aiding our blessed Lady and her divine infant *Jesus*; often gaze on his amiable aspect, on that divine countenance which the angels themselves covet to behold, but forget not my former advice to you; let fear and reverence temper your zeal and devotion lest you meet with a just repulse, for your own native poverty and meanness ought to render you unworthy, in your own eyes, the conversation of so divine and heavenly company.

It might afford us new matter of spiritual joy, were we to contemplate the greatness

of this day's solemnity. On this day was born *Christ*, that is, the Lord's truly *anointed*. And therefore, this is truly the birth-day of the eternal King of Heaven, the Son of the Almighty God. This day, "Unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given," *Isaiah vi.* Also this day the Son of Eternal Righteousness, which before was eclipsed, spread forth the bright beams of his mercy and grace to the world. On this day the Holy Ghost, head of the chosen people of God's Church, came forth from the inward recess of his sacred bride-chamber, and the fairest in form of the sons of men, graciously unveiled his lovely and long-wished-for pleasing countenance. On this day first was heard that angelical hymn * "*Gloria in excelsis Deo, &c.*" This day, as the church every where sings, the Heavens distilled honey, and the earth ecchos with angelical notes. On this day the humanity and benignity of God our Saviour first appeared among us. On this day God was worshiped in the likeness of sinful flesh. On this day were fulfilled those two wonderful mysteries surpassing all understanding, and to be reached only by faith, to wit, God is born, and a Virgin brings forth a Son. On this day many, almost innumera-
ble,

* Glory be to God on high, &c.

ble, other miracles were wrought. In a word, it was on this day, properly speaking, that all that has been said of the incarnation shone forth in its true lustre. For whatever was begun before, was not completed nor manifested till now: wherefore, it may not be improper to unite those passages which seem different in point of time, and to make them the subject of the same devout meditation. Not without great reason then, you see, is this day a day of public rejoicing, of spiritual mirth, and universal gladness. To confirm which, God was pleased to work the following miracles in the very center of Paganism. At *Rome* was a celebrated inn (or drinking-house) known by the title of the Pay-house, because thither the Roman soldiers used to resort, to regale themselves, and to spend their pay when they received it; and here, on the same day on which *Christ* was born, sprung forth a rich fountain of precious oil; and at the same time, a circle round the sun (in appearance like the rainbow) was seen in the Heavens and visible to the whole universe. And the golden statue which *Romulus*, founder of the Roman state, had erected in his palace, and which, (according to the Pagan oracles was not to fall till a virgin should bring forth a son) tumbled down to the ground and was reduced to dust. All this

this came to pass on the very day and instant *Christ* was born. In which place, to the honor of the blessed Virgin, Pope *Calistus* (in Process of time) built a church now called *St. Mary's Trans-Tyber*.

C H A P. VII.

The Circumcision of our Lord Jesus.

UPON the eighth day after the blessed infant was born, he was carried to the temple to be circumcised, according to the law of *Moses*. Two great mysteries were wrought on this Day. The first is, that the blessed Name, through which, only salvation is to be obtained, was this day made manifest to the world; and our blessed Lord and Saviour publicly called by the name of *JESUS*; which name had been given him by his heavenly Father from all eternity, and by the holy angel before he was conceived. And they called his name *Jesus*; that is, a Saviour. "Which name, (as the apostle says, Phil. ii.) is above all names." "For neither is there any other name in Heaven given to men wherein we must be saved," Acts iv. This second is, that on this day our Lord *Jesus* begun to shed his most precious blood for our sakes. So earnest was he to begin
early

THE LIFE OF



the Circumcision

early to sleep for that he who knew no
 the undertook this day to endure the pain of
 it for him. Here for kindness move us to
 compassion towards him. Let us shed at least
 some few tears with him who on this day
 shed many for us. For should upon these
 solemn days we have room to rejoice at our
 salvation purchased by the mystery they
 commemorate yet ought we likewise to
 conceive an inward sorrow and comfort in
 in view of the agonies and pain it cost him
 by whom they were graciously wrought.
 We have already seen how many were the
 afflictions he suffered together with the
 great poverty, bodily weakness, and
 derelict at the time of his nativity.
 But among other things which in
 there has not been related. His blessed
 Mother when she had reposed him in the
 manger, having no pillow with which to
 raise his head, made up for that purpose of
 a stone which she laid under his right cover
 with her. This I had from a devout pro-
 phet who saw in Egypt; and the same stone
 being now fixed in the wall is a visible me-
 morial of it. A cushion or pillow we may
 possibly imagine would which we may have
 seen her place, and the poor mother of one
 but having nothing more proper to answer
 the end to the great affliction of her tender



early to suffer for us, that he who knew no sin undertook this day to endure the pain of it for us. Here let tenderness move us to compassion towards him: Let us shed at least some few tears with him, who on this day shed many for us. For though upon such solemn days we have room to rejoice at our salvation purchased by the mysteries they commemorate; yet ought we likewise to conceive an inward sorrow and compassion, in view of the anguish and pain it cost him, by whom they were graciously wrought. We have already seen how many were the afflictions he suffered, together with the great poverty, penury, and distress he underwent, at the time of his sacred nativity. But among other things was this, which hitherto has not been related. His blessed Mother when she had reposed him in the manger, having no pillow with which to raise his head, made use for that purpose of a stone, which not unlikely she might cover with hay. This I had from a devout brother who saw it in spirit: and the same stone being now fixed in the wall, is a visible memorial of it. A cushion or a pillow, we may piously imagine, would much rather have been her choice, had she been mistress of one; but having nothing more proper to answer the end, to the great affliction of her tender heart,

heart, she was compelled to make use of that.

We have said before, that on this day he began to shed his sacred blood for us, and that indeed in a most severe manner: for his tender flesh was cruelly separated with a blunt and edgeless instrument of stone. What pity then ought not this to move us towards him and his holy Mother? What tears did not the tender infant *Jesus* shed at the incredible pain he suffered in the incision of his sacred flesh? for his was truly so, and as sensible of smart as that of any pure mortal. And can we reasonably imagine then, that his holy Mother, when she saw her beloved child in tears, could contain herself from them? No, we may well suppose, that like a compassionate parent, she ever accompanied him in all his afflictions; so that her tender heart melting now with grief in seeing him cry, she burst forth into tears herself, and wept with him. So likewise, may we imagine, that more affected with his Mother's grief than his own, the holy Babe as he lay extended on her lap, waved his little hands towards her lips, her cheeks, and her eyes, as it were to dry up those precious drops, and to request her to forbear shedding any more, struggling at the same time, to hide the excess of his own torture to mitigate her's. But she, alas! was too sensibly affected

fected with his sufferings not to shed tear for
 tear with him. Yet the divine wisdom within
 her, supplying the want of speech in him,
 enabled her to know his pleasure, before he
 had words to utter it; hence, perceiving
 that her grief added to his pain, often would
 she try to suppress it, and with signs of
 forced tranquillity endeavoured to console
 him: still often would she sigh, and with
 forbidden tears, ready to flow from her eyes,
 and waiting as it were in a state of violence
 to break their way, thus frequently would
 she address him with complaints of tender
 distressful love. Forbear, lovely babe! for-
 bear those precious tears, or suffer mine to
 flow. How can thy loving Mother see those
 clear eyes bedewed and cease to weep? Hence
 the blessed infant, in compassion to his holy
 Mother, would moderate his sobs and give
 over weeping; and she, with a Mother's
 tenderness, would wipe his sacred eyes and
 her own, incline her face to his, closely and
 tenderly press his blessed cheeks, and give
 him suck; and study mean-while the likeliest
 means to lull his pain and cherish him:
 In this manner, she behaved as often as he
 bewailed himself, which we may reasonably
 believe he often did after the nature of other
 children. — *First.* To shew the miserable
 weakness and wretchedness of man's condi-
 tion, whose nature he had truly assumed.

And, Secondly, To conceal himself from the devil, that he might not as yet know him to be God: for this reason, the holy church alluding to him in part of her service, sings:

"The tender infant, as he lies in the cold manger shakes and cries."

From this time, indeed the circumcision of the flesh was abolished, and its obligation ceased, baptism being instituted in its place, which is a sacrament of more extensive grace and less repugnant to nature, as being void of pain. And yet, gentle reader, the practice of spiritual circumcision ought still to remain in force, which consists in divesting ourselves of all that is superfluous, and embracing a true poverty of spirit. He, and he only is in truth spiritually circumcised, who is truly poor. This, says St. Bernard, the apostle teacheth us in few words, "having food and raiment, let us be content therewith," 1 Tim. vi. In a word, our spiritual circumcision must appear in all our senses. Let us then shew we are indeed spiritually circumcised, by renouncing (as much as our present state of nature will admit) the use of our sight, of our hearing, of our taste, of our touch, but above all, our speech. Much talk is a very great vice, odious to God and Man, and ever attended with fatal consequences. We must therefore shew ourselves circumcised in speech; by

by speaking seldom, and never but to good purpose: to speak much is a sure sign of levity. On the contrary, silence is a noble virtue, and not without great reason, especially recommended to religious persons, concerning this subject St. Bernard says thus. He is truly qualified to speak who has first learned to be silent, for silence is the only proper nurture of speech. And again in another place: 'It is ever the faculty of weak judgments to be rashly forward in speaking, for the hasty conceptions of a light fancy are always as hastily delivered by an unbridled tongue.' Wherefore says St. Bernard on the same subject: 'Who does not know how greatly man is defiled by the mire dropping from his own tongue: that is, by his idle discourse, by the falsehoods he advances, by slander, by flattery: in a word, by almost all his conversation checquered with malice and vanity? To restrain all which, he stands in great need of silence: a virtue which is, as it were, the sentinel of religious hearts, and their chief safe-guard against irreligion and undevotion. So dangerous is too much talk, even to laymen, according to St. Bernard. But much more (if we believe him) is it so to the clergy. Hear what he says elsewhere in relation to them, 'idleness,' says he, 'is the mother of idle jokes, and consequently

a barbarous step-mother to virtue. It is
 innocent jokes are trifles in the mouths of
 laymen, but all ludicrous discourse is un-
 seemly in the mouths of clergymen. Priests
 may sometimes take a joke, but should
 never indecently return it. It is unworthy
 their dignity to defile, with such kinds of
 discourse, those lips which are dedicated
 to, and consecrated by the holy gospel
 which they pronounce.

C H A P. VIII.

*The Epiphany, or Manifestation of our
 Lord Jesus.*

ON this day, which is the twelfth after
 the nativity, our Lord Jesus vouch-
 safed to make himself known to the *Gentiles*,
 in the person of the three kings. Render
 yourself present then, pious reader, to every
 circumstance herein related concerning this
 holy and solemn Festival: for you are to un-
 derstand, that no other festival in the holy
 church hath such diversity of service in its
 antiphons, lessons, responsories, or whatever
 else belongs to its celebration as this has.
 Not that it is greater or more excellent than
 all other festivals, but only that on this day
 many

a barbarous shepherd to virtue. It is
innocent in the months of
laymen. It is un-
less
ould



Kneller del.
Smith sc.

Not that it is
all other festivals
on this day

many things, both great and wonderful, were wrought by our Lord Jesus which chiefly regard the state and condition of the church itself.

First, then, The church which is gathered from the Gentiles, was on this day received by Christ Jesus, in the person of the three kings. For on the day of his nativity he had manifested himself to the shepherds, as representatives of the Jews, from whom (a small number excepted) he met with no reception. But on this day he appeared again, and made himself known to the Gentiles, by whom he was immediately acknowledged and received, and so it is that we are denoted, who in the church of God's chosen people, therefore this day ought specially to be kept as a most solemn feast in the church of God, and celebrated with great pomp, and hearts full of joy, by all good and pious christians.

Secondly, This day, nine and twenty years after his nativity, our Lord Jesus was baptized; by which mystery he spiritually wedded and truly espoused his holy church and united it to himself. And therefore on this occasion is joyfully sung: 'Hodie ecclesia sponsa junctae est ecclesiae', &c. This day the church is wedded to her heavenly spouse. For in our baptism, which receives all its efficacy from that of Christ, our

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soul being cleansed from the stain of sin, and newly clothed with grace, are truly espoused and wedded to him, and the congregation of souls, thus baptised, constitute the church of God's chosen people.

Thirdly. On the same day, a year after his baptism, he wrought his first miracle at the marriage-feast, converting water into wine, which, by allegory, may be likewise taken for the spiritual marriage between him and his church. It is probable likewise, that on the like day, our Lord *Jesus* wrought that other wonderful miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes. However, the church on this day only celebrates the three first of these Mysteries.

Consider hence in how great veneration and esteem this day ought to be held, upon which our Lord *Jesus* chose to work so many and such ineffable mysteries. The holy church therefore mindful of the many benefits and extraordinary favours conferr'd upon her this day, by her divine spouse, to shew her grateful sense of them, rejoices, sings, and solemnizes the same with praise, thanksgiving, and utmost magnificence.

But as the solemn institution of this festival was chiefly to commemorate the mystery of the Epiphany, we will therefore proceed to a further contemplation of the same, and defer meditating on the others till we shall

treat

treat of them in their proper place, according to the order in which they happened. And even concerning this (that is) the coming of the three kings to Christ our Saviour, my design here is not to take any notice of those learned comments and moral explications which many holy men, with great pains and industry, have made on that subject. Wherefore for the manner of the three kings coming from the east to Jerusalem, for what passed between them and Herod, for whatsoever relates to the star that conducted them thither, or to the matter and meaning of their different offerings, and other things of this kind, I remit you to the holy gospel, and to the explications of holy men on those heads; for as I said in the beginning of this work, my intention as well in this, as in all other passages, which occur in the life of Christ, is only to set down some few meditations, according to such devout conceptions as a pious mind is capable of forming, in relation to those things, which either happened in fact or might have happened, according to reasonable conjecture. But it was by no means my purpose to act the office of an expoliter; *First*, Because I am unequal to the task; and *Secondly*, For that it would prove too copious a subject for one man to peruse upon. Be mindful then with redoubled attention,

tion, to render yourself present as it were, to every particular here treated. For in this, as I mentioned, consists the whole force and efficacy of these meditations.

The three kings therefore being come to *Bethlehem*, with a great multitude of people, and a noble retinue, stopped as the star directed them, at the little hut in which our Lord *Jesus* was born. The blessed Virgin hearing the tumultuous noise of many people, snatches up her blessed Son *Jesus* in her arms, and in that moment the three kings entering the little mansion, as soon as they beheld the holy babe *Jesus*, threw themselves on their knees to adore him. Thus prostrate in a devout and reverent posture they honoured him as their king, and worshiped him as their God. Reflect how great and lively their faith must be! What in reality did then appear that could excite them to believe, that a poor, tender infant, in the arms of as poor a Mother, dejected, meanly cloathed, in a despicable cottage without furniture, without company, without attendants, could be really a king, could be truly their God? And yet such was their faith, that they believed both, in spite of all that their senses had to offer in opposition. Such were the guides, such the first leaders which heaven thought proper to give us, and such the great originals it be-

hoves us to copy after.—After they had devoutly paid this homage to our blessed Redeemer, and duly honoured his holy Mother, remaining still on their bended knees before him, we may piously imagine that they now began to discourse with the holy Virgin, and to ask many questions concerning her beloved Son, which they might do either by the help of an interpreter or by themselves, since as they were men of great wisdom and learning, they were probably sufficiently versed in the Hebrew language. They therefore submissively request her to acquaint them with the particular circumstances relating to the holy babe and herself. The blessed Virgin relates to them, and they readily believe all she tells them. Observe reverently, how awfully they address her and listen to her by turns. Mark too with what graceful majesty, mixed with a becoming modesty, the sacred Queen of Virgins returns the necessary replies; neither forward to talk, nor desirous to be seen. Yet God on this occasion endowed her with more than usual resolution to support her dignity in the presence of these princely votaries, as they personated the whole church, which he afterwards was to establish and did establish. Here again contemplate our Lord Jesus, who not yet pleased to speak with benign and pleasant aspect, fixes his eyes upon them,

and with gravity becoming his full maturity of judgment attentively observes them, full well apprized of all that passes. And what pleasure must not they, admiring princes conceive, in beholding him, the fairest and the most beautiful among the children of men! and to behold him not merely with the eyes of the body, but with a kind of mental intuition, as men inwardly taught and enlightened by the object they gazed on. Thus replenished with joy and consolation, at length, they made their offerings to him in the following manner; opening their coffers and spreading a carpet at the feet of our Lord *Jesus*, they humbly kneeled down before him, and laying their treasures at his feet, devoutly offered to him the precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in great abundance, but more especially of gold. We may reasonably suppose, that the gifts of these three kings were both great and rich, and that the gold might exceed all the rest in quantity and bulk; for had their offerings been but small and of little value, it would have been a needless trouble for them to have opened their treasures (as the gospel says they did) when their servants, who were near at hand, might have helped them to what they wanted, more readily, and with less trouble.

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When they had compleated their offerings and laid their precious treasures before him, they reverently prostrated themselves and devoutly kissed his sacred feet. And why may not we piously imagine that the blessed infant full of divine wisdom, the more to comfort them, and settle their affections on him, tendered them his divine little hand to kiss; and blessed them with it. After this they submissively inclined to our blessed Lady, and taking leave of her and St. *Joseph*, with hearts full of joy and comfort, they returned again, (as the gospel says) into their native country by another way.

But what think we, did the blessed Virgin with those gifts, or how can we suppose she employed so great a quantity of gold and other valuable presents? Did she, think you, hoard them up for her own or her divine Son's use? Did she lay them out in the purchase of lands or houses? No, she was too much in love herself with virtuous poverty, and knew too well the will of her blessed infant, for that their inward communication of souls, as well as every little outward gesture left her no room to doubt of his contempt of riches. What use then could she make of them?—What use?—The best and only virtuous use that can be made of earthly riches. In a word, she distributed them in a few days time to the poor: of so little estimation,

mation, nay, so burdensome and offensive in the sight of *Christ* and his Mother, are the treasures of this world and the pride of kings! Nay, our blessed Lady so intirely disposed of the whole, that at her entrance after into the temple, to present her child, she had not wherewith to purchase a lamb for his ransom (as the law directed) but offered a pair of turtles for him, the usual offering of the poor. Thus is it consonant with reason, both to admire the magnificent devotion of the wise men in the nobleness of their offerings; and to adore the exalted charity and love of poverty of the Queen of Heaven, in her distribution of them to the indigent.

You have here, gentle reader, before your eyes, the truest and best commendation that can be given to poverty: concerning which, two things are especially worthy your observation. First, *Christ* our Saviour, and his holy Mother the blessed Virgin, disdained not to receive alms, like necessitous persons. Secondly, They were so far from being solicitous to attain riches, or anxious to hoard them, that they would not so much as keep what was liberally bestowed upon them, encreasing daily in the love and desire of poverty.

But have you yet made any reflection on the profound humility that appears in them on this occasion? Surely, if you recollect,

you

you cannot but perceive a most perfect example of it. We daily meet with many, who, in their own eyes, are very mean, and not raised by any opinion of merit they experience in themselves, yet are wholly unwilling to appear such in the eyes of others, and cannot easily bear to be contemned by any, to have their faults disclosed, or that the meanness of their poor condition should be made public, lest it might draw upon them the scorn and disesteem of the world. But this is not the example which our Lord *Jesus* gives them this day, who, though the supreme Lord and Master of all things, would have his poverty exposed to all, and his low condition to appear openly to others; and this not to a few only, or to such as were poor and distressed like himself, but even to numbers of rich and noble personages, to princes and kings, and to their numerous retinue. Nay, and this at a time of no little danger. For they who came from so remote and distant countries in search of the King of the *Jews*, whom they believed to be God and Lord of all things, finding him in so poor and humble a condition, might thence have imagined themselves grossly deluded, and therefore returned home without either faith or devotion. But this hinder'd not our true lover of humility from giving us so rare an example, that we might learn from him never to neglect

neglect the true practice of that virtue under the specious pretext of some fancied good: but that we should learn to be solicitous of appearing contemptible, not only to your own, but even to the eyes of others.

C H A P. IX.

The blessed Virgin remained at the crib till the full term of forty days was expired.

AFTER the three kings had performed their offerings, and were returned again on their way to their own country; the holy Virgin, with her blessed son *Jesus*, and the venerable St. *Joseph* her beloved spouse, remained still in the humble stall of *Bethlehem*, waiting with patience in that poor and little mansion, till the full term of forty days was compleated, as the law directed, for purification; as if she had been full of sin, and defiled by her child-bearing, as others of her sex are, and the child *Jesus* only a sinful man and not God, and therefore under an obligation of complying with the strict observance of the law. But, because they would enjoy no special prerogatives above others, they voluntarily submitted to the law made

made for others. This is not the practise of many, who, conversing among the rest of mankind, claim to themselves undue titles to certain prerogatives above others, and seek to be singularly distinguished from them, contrary to the dictates of true humility.

Our blessed Lady then, like other women, remained all the while contented, expecting the before-mentioned day on which she was to enter into the temple. During the space of time she was studiously watchful, and diligent in the care of her blessed Son, And oh most gracious God, how great indeed may we devoutly imagine was her solicitude, and with what attention did she look after him, lest any thing should trouble or molest him! With what caution mix'd with timorous respect did she officiate about him whom she knew to be her Lord and Sovereign God, never taking him from, or replacing him in the manger, but on her bended knees? With what unspeakable pleasure, confidence, and motherly tenderness would she embrace him, often kiss him, and, sweetly pressing him, take inexpressible delight in him? How often did she behold, with a kind of innocent and pleasing curiosity, his blessed countenance and graceful form! How discreetly was she used to bind and swathe his tender limbs! For as she was profoundly practised in true humility,

so

so was she also thoroughly instructed in true wisdom. Wherefore she took special care to perform with greatest diligence every minute office or duty belonging to her charge in regard to him, not only during his infancy, but after. Oh with what a free and willing mind did she ever give him suck! And the pleasure she then conceived in suckling so divine a babe, could not but surpass that of the rest of her sex. St. Bernard further adds, 'That it is not improbable but that St. Joseph often took delight in caressing the infant Jesus, and devoutly cherishing him on his knee.' Let us now accompany in spirit the blessed Virgin at the manger, and take a pleasure in the pious meditation of our Lord the infant Jesus, from whom there ever flows a plentitude of divine grace. For every devout and pious soul, from Christmas to the purification, ought with profound respect and joyful transports, at least once a day, mentally to visit our blessed Lady, and to adore her divine Son Jesus on her knee, piously and affectionately meditating on the poverty, humility, and ineffable goodness of both.

CHAP.

C. H. A. P. X.
*The Purification of our blessed Lady, or
 Candlemas-day.*

NOW when the fortieth day was come, which was prefixed by the law for purification, the blessed Virgin with her Son *Jesus* and *St. Joseph*, set out from *Bethlehem* on their journey to *Jerusalem*, about six miles distant, there to present her blessed child in the temple, as it is written in the law. Let us here accompany the holy travellers on their journey, in devout contemplation, and help the sacred Virgin to bear her lovely charge, the infant *Jesus*; and with redoubled earnestness and attention, be inwardly intent, and as it were present, to every thing that is here said or done, being real subjects of the sublimest devotion. Thus then do they bring the Lord of the temple to the temple of the Lord. At the entrance thereof, they bought a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons to offer to God for him, as was the custom of other poor people. But as their circumstances were low, we may rather suppose that their offerings consisted only of two pigeons, which were of a less price then the doves;

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and

and for that reason are mentioned the last in the law. And the holy Evangelist takes no notice here of a lamb which was the usual offering of the rich. At this time the holy *Simeon*, who was a man both just and devout, being led by the divine spirit, came into the temple to see *Christ* the Son of God, whom he had long before desired to behold, and whom the Holy Ghost had promised he should see before his death. Wherefore, coming with speed to the temple, he no sooner beheld the divine babe than he prophetically knew him, and with bended knees adored him in his Mother's arms. The holy infant blessed him; and looking earnestly upon his Mother, bended forwards, making signs to go to him. The holy Virgin, full of pleasing surprise, understanding his blessed will, gave him immediately to *Simeon*, who with extatic joy and reverence becoming his distance, received him in his arms, arose, and blessing God, said: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace, because mine eyes have seen thy salvation, &c."

Luke ii. Prophecying many things concerning his sacred passion. And holy *Anna*, the prophetess, at that instant, likewise, coming into the temple, gave thanks to God, adored the child *Jesus*, and spoke many things relating to him, and the redemption that

JESUS CHRIST.

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that should be wrought by him to all mankind. These things raising great admiration in the mind of the holy Virgin, she made a secret record of them, and safely deposited them in her heart. At length, the holy infant stretching forth his arms towards his Mother, was again delivered to her. After this they proceed forwards towards the altar, in manner of procession (which is annually represented on *Candlemas-day*, throughout the whole church, by the blessing of candles.) First went the two venerable old men, *Joseph* and *Simeon*, hand in hand, with transports of joy and spiritual mirth, repeating and singing: "Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good and his mercy endureth forever, &c." *Psal. xvii.* "The Lord is faithful in all his words, and holy in all his works, &c." *Ibid. cxlvii.* "For this God is our God, without end he shall be our guide forever, &c." *Ibid. xlvii.* "We have received, O Lord, thy mercy in the midst of thy temple." *Ibid.* These were followed by the sacred Virgin herself, bearing her blessed Son in her arms, accompanied by the holy widow *Anna* the prophetess; who, full of unspeakable joy, walked with profound reverence and devotion, close by her side, rendering all praise and thanksgiving to God. These, then, were all that formed this procession, which, though consisting

sitting of few persons, represented notwithstanding most great and wonderful mysteries. There were present of ^{each} every sex and every state, youth, calibacy, marriage, and widowhood. Being come to the altar, the holy Virgin kneeling down, with profound reverence and devotion, offered her dearest Son to his heavenly Father, saying: 'Vouchsafe, O most sovereign Lord, to receive thy beloved Son, whom according to the appointment of thy divine will, and to fulfil the precepts of thy holy law, I here prostrate, offer unto you as the first-born of his Mother. But I beseech thy mercy, most gracious Father, to vouchsafe again to restore him me, and then rising, she laid him upon the altar. Oh, great God, and most merciful Lord, what a precious and most acceptable offering was this! It was surely such as had never before been made from the beginning of time, nor will ever be again.

Behold here, and attentively consider how the blessed infant Jesus, quietly remains upon the altar, like another infant, and with serene and pleasing aspect beholding his Mother, and the rest who stand about him, humbly waits with patience to see what is further to be done. Then came forth the priest of the temple, and the sovereign Lord

of all things, was again redeemed with the low price of five pence, or five small pieces of coin called shekels, as was the custom to pay for other poor children.^(a) After Joseph had paid to the priest, the blessed Virgin joyfully received him again into her arms. And taking from Joseph the above-mentioned pair of turtles, she knelt down, and, lifting up her eyes devoutly to heaven, offered them, saying: 'Oh! eternal Lord, 'and most gracious Father of Heaven, 'vouchsafe I beseech thee to accept this 'offering, and first little gift which your 'beloved Son of his extreme poverty presents unto you!' Then he, stretching forth his hands towards the doves, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, though he said nothing, yet with pleasing countenance gave most expressive signs of offering them together with his Mother: And thus she left the birds upon the altar.

Consider here, christian reader, and earnestly behold the great dignity and majesty of those who make this offering: that is, the blessed Virgin Mother, and her divine Son Jesus: and let us imagine whether this little offering, made by such persons, could possibly be rejected by God? No, rather may we devoutly suppose it to have been carried up to heaven by the hands of angels, and

(a) five shekels amounted to about fifteen shillings of our money.

or two young pigeons.

there presented by them, to have been most gratefully accepted by the Almighty God, with loud and earnest jubilities of the whole celestial court.

After the offering was ended, the holy Virgin, with her Son *Jesus*, and *Joseph*, departed from the city of *Jerusalem*, in order to return home again to the little city of *Nazareth*, their native place of abode. But the sacred Virgin, being desirous once more of seeing *St. John* before she left those parts, by the way she visited a second time her cousin *St. Elizabeth*. Go thou with her whithersoever she goes, and in devout meditation assist her in carrying her lovely babe. When our blessed Lady and *St. Elizabeth* met together they were extremely overjoyed at the sight of each other, but more especially in beholding each their blessed Sons, *Jesus* and *John*, who, with no less tokens of joy, lovingly congratulated together; and *St. John*, as though conscious of the dignity of his sacred guest, behaved towards *Jesus* with the utmost submission and respect. When they had rested there some few days, they again prepared for their journey; and departed thence for *Nazareth*. And here, devout reader, if from what has already been said, you wish to learn the poverty and humility they practised, you need only consider the

the poverty of their offering the humility in his ransom, and the strict compliance in both with the precepts of God's holy law.

CHAP. XI.

Christ's flight into Egypt.

NOW as the parents of holy *Jesus* were proceeding on their journey to *Nazareth*, unapprised of the designs of heaven, and of the treacherous machinations of *Herod* against the life of the divine infant, the angel of God appeared in a dream to *Joseph*, warning him to retire with the babe and its mother into *Egypt*; for that the merciless tyrant was bent upon the destruction of the child. Upon this, *Joseph* immediately rising, ran to awake the blessed Virgin, and informed her of the angel's warning: Who shocked to the very soul by this alarm, suddenly arose, and without a moment's delay, prepared to escape; resolving to neglect nought that might contribute to the safety of her beloved Son: And accordingly both set out with him that very night, by a private way towards *Egypt*. Here follow them in meditation: behold how they snatch up the sleeping infant: compassionate their distress; and

and reap the benefit of the many pious remarks that may here be made.

And first, consider the many vicissitudes our Saviour went through of prosperity and adversity. And when the like changes shall happen to you, learn to bear them with the manly patience becoming his followers: whenever you see before you a steep ascent; be not dismayed, for know that the labour of climbing will but enhance the sweets of repose you are afterwards to breathe. Thus *Christ* was no sooner born than glorified by the pastors as God; and yet, how soon after was he circumcised as if a sinner? Thus was he honoured with the homage, visit, and presents of the Eastern Monarchs, yet humbled to the association with beasts in a homely stable, with no other comfort than that of tears which the meanest beggar's child had in common with him. Thus too was he solemnly presented in the temple and extolled by the prophetic predictions of *Simeon* and *Anna*, who is now warned by an angel to depart like a fugitive from his native country to *Egypt*. Many other instances of the like nature you may find in the life of *Christ*, from which, with a little virtuous industry, you may reap the greatest benefit and instruction. Learn then to curb the transports of prosperity by reflecting that it is, in general, but the forerunner
of

of adversity. And be firm in tribulation, in view of the tranquillity and happiness that are to succeed them. For it is the dispensation of providence to chequer afflictions with intervals of pleasure, the better to nourish our hope and preserve us against being borne away by a too tedious tide of troubles, and to interperse tribulations amidst our felicity, that we may not be elated by it, but remain always in fear from the consciousness of our miserable condition. All this did our Lord for our instruction, and to conceal himself from *Satan*. Lose not the benefit of it for want of reflecting thereon.

Secondly, Be mindful that he, who enjoys benefits and prosperity from the gift of God, has no right to prefer himself to those who are not blest alike: and such as are less profusely favoured with them, ought not to be dejected, or envious in view of such as are more so. This I take occasion to observe from the angelical visit which was paid to *Joseph*, not to his blessed spouse *Mary*, tho' she was so much superior to him. So when we find St. *Joseph*, though so eminent in the sight of God, favoured but in a dream with an angelical visit which were so much more to be coveted in the full enjoyment of the senses; we should learn not to be ungrateful to God for the gifts of his bounty, by murmuring

mering when they are not so extensive as our desires.

Thirdly, Consider that it is by the special permission of the Almighty that the elect are harrassed by troubles and persecutions. It was doubtless, no small affliction to the parents of *Jesus* that his death was sought after. For what more perplexing news could be brought to them? It is true, they knew him to be the Son of God: but that was not sufficient to ward the inferior part from despondency. Why (might they not have said?) Why, O Lord, since thou art Almighty, should it be necessary to fly with thy Son into *Egypt*? Art not thou powerful enough every where to preserve us unhurt? Why should we be reduced to the painful necessity of fleeing from our native land to a distant, unknown country, through rough and dangerous ways? Add to this, that the divine infant was in age too tender seemingly for so laborious a journey, being yet but two months old: and his parents unfit for the fatigues as well as dangers of the road; the one, on account of her being so young, the other, by reason of his age, and both, for want of necessaries to travel with, which their extreme poverty denied them. If these were not matters of excessive affliction, what is so? Do you, therefore, when in tribulation, arm yourself with patience, nor expect
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from your divine master those privileges which he reserved not for his mother or himself.

Fourthly, Consider his ineffable benignity. How soon and how patiently does he submit to persecution for your sake, and to banishment from his own country; rather chusing meekly to fly the tyranny than punish the tyrant, more solicitous to prevent the commission of a crime, than to exercise his vengeance on the criminal. O how profound is the patience and humility! He will neither do injuries nor return them; and therefore, meekly contents himself with avoiding the consequences of them! Thus does it behove us to behave in regard to such as abuse, ill-treat, or persecute us. Instead of making alike return, instead of loading them with the effects of our vengeance, let us bear them with patience, and endeavour to avoid the rage of their malice; nay, let us pray for them, and return them good for their evil, and after the example which our divine Master has elsewhere set us.

In fine, our Lord, submitted to flee from the face of his vassal, his servant, his slave; nay, from a devil incarnate. In this journey he was borne along by his mother in her tenderest youth, and by St. *Joseph* a feeble old man, through a wild, rough, pathless, unfrequented tedious length of road to
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Egypt; which requires a fortnight's post for a courier to perform; and they perhaps were some months in compassing it. For, if we may credit tradition, they crossed that desert in which the children of *Israel* remained forty years. And what hunger and thirst must they not endure before the end of their journey? For how should such poor and feeble persons be able to carry with them the supply of provisions necessary for so long a progress? And if they did not, where should they be supplied in so trackless and uninhabited a wilderness? And where, think you, could they find a shelter from the hardness of the ground, and the inclemency of the air, to repose themselves by night, amidst a waste, where houses might seem useless for want of inhabitants. Compassionate therefore, these illustrious sufferers, who must doubtless labour under many, mighty, and tedious difficulties and hardships, as well themselves, as the divine babe they carried with them: accompany them in mind, and share with them, the heavy toil of carrying the blessed infant; and wish to alleviate, as much as possible, their excessive fatigues. Grudge not to bear a little affliction and penance for yourselves; since so much has been borne for you by others, by such so considerable personages; nay, and so many times. I will not give you, pious reader, any detail

tail of what happened to them on their way to *Egypt*; all the idols in the country fell in pieces. They travelled as far as *Heliopolis*, and there, renting a little cottage, dwelt for seven years in the place, in the quality of poor, indigent, homeless strangers.

And here, devout christian, we enter into an ample and beautiful field of pious and tender meditation: and therefore, attend diligently to the following reflections. Whence, and by what means, could they procure even a homely subsistence for so long a space of time as they remained in this country? Did they content themselves, think you, with the idle occupation of begging? No, we are informed by several sacred writers, how ingenious as well as industrious our blessed Lady was at her needle and spinning; and that she was extremely assiduous in working for the support of her beloved Son and spouse. They were all constant lovers of poverty from the beginning, and continued so to the end of their immaculate lives. Now, may we not suppose, that she was reduced to go from house to house to solicit for work? For how should the neighbourhood know either her wants or inclination to be employed, without her doing so? And yet what reluctance must not this pattern of modesty feel in being obliged to expose her virginal bashfulness to the

the loose looks of curious and shameless gazers, by going abroad! Which, nevertheless, we may conceive she could not avoid doing, without taking her beloved spouse and help-mate from his labours, who, no doubt, was busy on his side in earning as much as old age would permit him, to aid his sacred spouse, to support the blessed *Jesus*, till he came to an age to lessen their labour by his own. Indeed, when he came to the competent age of a youth, we may without absurdity believe, that he saved his mother's blushes and shared in her labour, by carrying home the works as she finished them, and soliciting for more: for what other messenger can we suppose she had? So may we imagine, that oftentimes the careful Virgin, to buy necessary food for him, was forced to send him for the money which remained due to her for work unpaid, or to importune and implore for part of it at least. And what humiliation must it not be for the Son of God to be sent on such a message? And what must not her confusion be, to be reduced to send him on it? And what if when the sacred youth carried home the labours of his parent to such as had employed her, and requested the fruits of her fatigue from them, might he not often meet with some riotous, abusive, noisy termagant, who, instead of money, paid him with ill-language, and

and shutting the doors against him, sent him home empty? How many such insults are not daily practised towards poor and helpless strangers! And can we suppose, that *Christ* escaped them, who went thither in search of them? How often has he come home hungry, as children are wont to be, and, asking his mother for bread, had the mortification to hear her answer him with a sigh, that she had none to give him! What anguish must she not feel on such occasions! With what tender words would she try to appease his hunger and console him! With what redoubled industry would she not labour to procure him the food he called for! And how often has she not defrauded her own appetite, and robbed it of its meal to save one for him! These, and such like points are exceedingly pleasing as well as useful to meditate on, concerning *Christ* and his blessed Mother. I have here paved the way for you to do it. It is now your business to reap the advantage, by extending and pursuing with devotion such pious thoughts as these, in order to become little with the little *Jesus*. Scorn not therefore to reflect on the most humble and minute circumstances that may be conceived to have attended him; however childish they may appear in the eye of worldlings. For they are most evidently capable of adding force to our devotion, and

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new warmth to our love, to enflame our affection, to excite our compassion, to confer new purity and simplicity to our manners; to nourish in us a strong propension to poverty and humility, to keep up in us a certain familiarity of practice of the virtues we observe in these divine personages, to create in us a kind of similitude and conformity with them, and finally, to raise and strengthen our hopes of enjoying the fruits of that goodness we so much admire and wish to imitate in them. It is incompatible with our low state to ascend to the sublimity of God. But as *St. Paul* observes, 'That which seems foolish of him, is wiser than the greatest human prudence; and that which seems weak, surpasses all the power of man.' Besides, the meditation of these humble subjects seems capable of abating, if not totally destroying our pride; of weakening our ambition; and confounding our vain curiosity. So much good comes from such spiritual employment. See, therefore, and endeavour to become little with the little *Jesus*, that you may, (without prejudice to humility) grow up and be great in measure as he shall: follow him whithersoever he goes, and keep your eyes always upon him.

But have you yet reflected enough to gather from what has been said, how painful

ful their poverty must be, and how mortifying to this bashful family? Had they, think you, choice of any thing; any thing superfluous; any thing curious? No, This was contrary to a state of poverty; and therefore she, who loved poverty so well, would never have consented to possess any thing of that kind. Nay, so scrupulous was she of giving way to curiosity, or any thing that seemed opposite to poverty or virtuous industry, that she would not at any price, nor for the sake of any one, so much as put her finger to rich, curious, trifling, or unnecessary works. No, she would often say, when such trifles were brought to her, let them work at this who have not their time at heart. And how indeed could she, in such a dejected state of poverty, afford to idle away so much precious time as is required in the contrivance as well as working of certain expensive bawbles, of no signification even when they are finished? Though poverty was not the sole dissuasive that kept her from such kind of work: No, had she been less poor than she really was, she would have refused them alike: since such kind of employments, properly speaking, are but a more dangerous kind of idleness; as may appear from many reasons. First, Because they are but an expensive method of wasting and mispending time: since all such kinds of

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labours require many more hours (not to say days and months) to compleat them, than they possibly can be worth when compleated. Secondly, Because they are the causes of vain-glory in such as work them. O how many fond and self-applauding looks does the worker throw away upon such idle pieces of ingenuity! That curiously flowered apron; that embroidered mantle; this other trimming so richly woven, so well concerted! How often, alas, how often does it engross the contriver's thoughts even when away from it; even at the most sacred occupations! And when the mind should be employed in studying how to render the soul more pleasing in the sight of God, it has enough to do to contrive, to carry on, to perfect a work of this nature, of no manner of consequence when it is done. This is a weakness the female sex are more particularly guilty of, a weakness so much the more to be lamented in them, as they are insensible in general how blameable it is. And yet I make no doubt but that devout sex will soon be convinced of it, if they but seriously reflect, on the time they lose by it, the ill-habits they gain, and the mischiefs they do: and all to tax themselves and others with an unmerited applause. Thirdly, These kinds of labours are condemnable on account of the pride they occasion in the persons they
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are done for. Experience shews us that these sorts of things are the proper fuel to feed and foment the fire of pride. For as what is mean and lowly cherishes humility, so what is curious and gaudy nourishes pride and vanity. Fourthly, They are causes of alienating the soul from God: for as St. *Gregory* very judiciously remarks, 'The soul becomes more and more weaned from the divine love, in proportion as its affection for earthly objects encreases.' Fifthly, They are unhappy incitements to the concupiscence of the eye, one of the three great origins of all sin in the world: for such vain objects can be useful to no other end than to attract the looks of the vain. And yet as often as any one takes delight in idly gazing on such vain and empty trifles, be she the worker or the enjoyer of them, so often she offends God. Sixthly, They are but too often a snare and bane to such as behold them; who may many ways transgress by barely looking on them; for example, by taking scandal, by coveting them, by envying the possessors of them, by rash judgment, by silent murmuring, or finally, by open detracting.

Think therefore, how often, and how many ways God may be offended by such curious trifles, or rather laborious idleness, before they are brought to a conclusion? And consider whether you, O female reader, and

every effeminate worker of such needless curiosities are not the guilty instruments of all those evils! Wherefore whoever should persuade you to work them such kind of things, you ought never to comply with their request, because no authority can justify your consenting to the vanity of others; and whatever can possibly tend to the offending God, is absolutely to be avoided. How much more then are you blameable, if, of your own accord, you do it; to ingratiate yourselves, more desirous of rendering yourselves agreeable in the sight of man than God. Leave therefore to worldlings such works as are indeed the proper trappings of the world, but the aversion of God. It is not indeed to be wondered that persons of little solidity and less piety should make such vain amusements their great business of life; but what cannot be sufficiently admired at is, that the devouter part, they, who are desirous of attaining to perfect purity of conscience, should defile themselves with such soil, such mere litter! When it is plain to be seen how many evils are produced from it, of which it is not perhaps the least dangerous one, to act so opposite to the spirit of poverty. To conclude in a word, such kind of employments are shrewd signs of levity, vanity, and inconstancy, in the generality of those who give themselves up to them.

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Be you therefore, O spiritual Christian; as apprehensive of such amusements as you would be of playing with the most venomous serpent. I would not however be thought to condemn all beautiful works of ingenuity. Nothing more innocent than these pretty productions of fancy which are designed only for a short relaxation from more intense applications of the mind, but especially such works as are dedicated to the service of God at his altar; provided they are done without too much affection, delight, or attachment of heart, for that is absolutely to be taken care of. All I mean to decry is, those curious nothings, which tend only to feed vanity, to nourish luxury, to bring poverty to scorn, to enervate devotion, and wean the affections of the soul from the Creator to the creature. Of which kind of curiosities hear what St. *Bernard* thinks. ‘Tell me, I beseech you,’ (says he) ‘what can such vanities avail the body; or what advantage do they bring to the soul? They are at best, but a poor, empty, childish satisfaction.’ And it were hard to invent a severer imprecation on those, who, despising the peaceful enjoyment of pleasant repose, delight in the restlessness of curiosity, than to wish they may be condemned to the possession of whatever they hanker after.

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But let us return from this long digression (into which the detestable error of curiosity led me) to contemplate our blessed Lady in *Egypt*, amidst her labours of sewing, knitting, spinning, &c. Think how diligently, humbly, and patiently she persevered in these exercises, without slackening in the least her motherly care of her divine Son, or the business of her family, still assiduous to her devout exercises of watching and prayer, whenever her necessary occupations permitted her the leisure. Compassionate her therefore, and at the same time make this useful reflection: That even the Queen of Heaven purchased Heaven by violence: And can you then expect to obtain it otherwise? It is not improbable however that some charitable matrons of her neighbourhood, witnesses of her great industry and extreme poverty, might now and then send her some small relief, which she submitted to accept with humility and thankfulness. Though it is equally probable that the holy St. *Joseph* was as industrious as his great age would permit him, to earn a support for his family at the laborious trade of a carpenter. Thus you see what ample subjects of compassion rise before you at every step. Pause here awhile:—then, requesting the blessing of the divine *Jesus* and his parents, take leave of these innocent exiles, who, banished

nished without cause from their native land, are reduced to wander, and earn their bread in a foreign country at the sweat of their brows.

CH A P. XII.

Our Lord's returning from Egypt.

WHEN the Lord had compleated his seven years exile in *Egypt*, an angel appeared to *Joseph* in a dream, and bid him carry back the Youth and his Mother to the land of *Israel*: for they are now dead who sought the death of the Boy. *Joseph* therefore patiently took the Child and his Mother, and returned to the country of the *Israelites*; but at his arrival upon the borders, hearing that *Archelaus*, the son of *Herod*, reigned there, he began to dread going any farther, till again instructed by the angel he retired into *Golilee* to the city of *Nazareth*. Which, according to the martyrology, was much about the same time of the year as the Epiphany.

Here again, you see, as before, how God often sends his revelations, spiritual comforts, and other graces as it were but by halves, and not according to the fulness of our wishes. This may appear from two circumstances:

cumstances: First, from his sending the angel to *Joseph*, not openly, but in a dream: Secondly, From the angel's not giving him his whole instructions at once, but at two several times. Indeed the gloss says, that God did so, because St. *Joseph*, and every one blest in the like manner, must be more certain of their vision from a repetition of it. But be that as it may, we ought to set a value upon every the least gift of Heaven, and be grateful for it, since we ought to assure ourselves that God disposes every thing on his part for our greatest benefit.

But now let us stick to our Saviour's return from *Egypt*. Be you, devout reader, very attentive to it; it is rich in matter of pious meditation. Return then mentally to *Egypt*, with the pure intention of visiting the child *Jesus*; fancy yourself to find him among other children, with whom he deigns to play for their spiritual good: Imagine that he runs to meet you; for he is all affability, bounty, and courtesy. Fly then to prevent him, and throwing yourself on your knees, adore and kiss his sacred feet: then rising, take him into your arms, devoutly embrace him, and dwell a while in this sweet contemplation. Think you hear him say to you: 'Welcome hither, oh devout soul, partake the glad tidings with me, of our being again at liberty to return to *Israel*;' and

‘ and since you are come hither at so favourable a juncture, stay with me, and join us in our journey.’ In consequence of which, express your joy to him, the desire you have of accompanying him always, and everywhere, and the delight you take in conversing with him. Though, as I have already observed to you, these kind of pious thoughts may, and undoubtedly will, seem childish in the opinion of worldlings; yet know that a devout and frequent meditation on them will yield you a more than common consolation, and dispose you to greater and more sublime subjects. After this, fancy yourself led by our divine Saviour to his Parents, who graciously receive, and courteously treat you. Throw yourself again on your knees, and, devoutly revering them, remain along with them.

The next morning when they are ready to set out on their journey, imagine you see some of the most respectable matrons of the city, and the wiser part of the men, come to accompany them out of the gates, in acknowledgment of their peaceful, neighbourly, and pious manner of living and conversing while among them. For doubtless they had given notice some days before-hand of their departure, that they might not seem to steal away in a clandestine manner, which might have looked suspicious now they had

not the same reason for doing it as when they fled into *Egypt* to preserve the infant *Jesus* from the hands of a butcher. And now suppose them setting out, holy *Joseph*, accompanied by the men, going before; and our Lady following, attended by the matrons. Do you therefore take the blessed infant in your arms, and devoutly carry him before her, for she suffers him not out of her presence.

When they were out of the gates, the holy *Joseph* dismissed the company, not suffering them to go on any farther; when one of the wealthiest of them called the child *Jesus*, and in compassion to the poverty of his parents, bestows a few pence upon him; and the rest of the company, after the example of the first, do the same. Compassionate here the confusion of the divine child, who blushing, holds his little hands out to receive what the love of poverty has reduced him to want: pity likewise his holy parents, who share his confusion with him; and think on the great lesson here set you, when you see him who made the earth, and all that is in it, make choice of so rigorous a poverty, and so penurious a life, for his blessed parents and himself. What lustre does not the virtue of poverty receive from their practice! And how can we behold it in them without being charmed to the love and imitation of the like perfection.

perfection! After returning thanks to their company, and taking their leave, they sat out on their journey. But how, think you, was the infant *Jesus* able to go through the fatigues of so long a way? When he went into *Egypt* the smallness of his size made it easy for his parents to carry him; but now, too big to be carried, he is yet too little and tender to walk it. Possibly indeed some tender-hearted neighbour might bestow on them an ass to carry him on. Yet, O admirable Youth! O delicate Stripling! O Sovereign of Heaven and Earth! How soon did you begin, and what labours did you consent to suffer for our sakes! Well might these words prophetically personate you: 'I am poor, and subject to labours from my youth.' What extreme penury! What endless toil! What bodily hardships, and rigorous treatment of yourself did you not assume for our sakes! Should not this very labour we are now meditating have sufficed to redeem us? Take then the child *Jesus*, O devout reader, and in your imagination place him devoutly on the ass, conduct him carefully, and when he is inclined to dismount receive him joyfully in your arms, and tenderly cherish him awhile, till his blessed Mother comes up, who may be supposed to walk slower. Then resign the divine Child to her arms, the reception of

whom will stand her in stead of repose. Thus they repass the desert they came through, where you may frequently compassionate them on the way, on account of the little rest they receive, though wasted day and night with fatigue. When they reached the utmost skirt of the wilderness, they found there *John* the Baptist, who already began to do penance, though privileged from sin. It is said, that that part of *Jordan* where *John* baptised, is the same which the children of *Israel* passed over, when they came through this desert out of *Egypt*; and that *John* did penance near the same place. So that it is not improbable that *Christ* might find him there in his return from *Egypt*. Fancy then you see him joyfully receiving them: who, remaining with him awhile, and partaking of his coarse and homely provisions, share with him in return, the sweets of spiritual recreation, and then depart. You therefore, at meeting and parting, omit not to pay your reverence to the Saint, but throw yourself at his feet, and devoutly kissing them, recommend yourself to the intercession of this youth, excellent and wonderful in every circumstance of his life. He was the first hermit, the founder and pattern of all who make choice of a religious and solitary life: he was an unspotted virgin, an excellent preacher, more than a prophet,

prophet, and a glorious martyr. After parting from *John*, the blessed travellers crossed over *Jordan*, and called at the house of *Elizabeth*, where they passed some time in mutual congratulations, spiritual joy, and celestial mirth. Here *Joseph* being informed that *Archelaus* reigned in *Judea*, and admonished in a dream by an angel, they retired to the city of *Nazareth* in *Galilee*.

And now we have brought back the child *Jesus* out of *Egypt*, at whose return, the sisters, and other relations and friends of our blessed Lady, came to congratulate with them in *Nazareth*, where they remain; and pursue their usual love of poverty. From this time, to the twelfth year of age of the blessed *Jesus*, nothing remarkable is recorded of him. It is said however, and is not improbable, that the fountain is still to be seen there, out of which he used to draw water for his mother. For our truly humble Lord often did such humble offices for her, as she had no one else to do them. Here too we may suppose, that St. *John* the Evangelist, who was then about five years old, often came to visit our Lord, accompanied by his mother, who was sister to the blessed Virgin. For it is written of him, that he died sixty-seven years after our Lord's Passion, in the ninety-eighth year of his age; so that at the time of *Christ's* suffering,
which

which was when he was something turned of thirty-three years old, St. *John* was thirty-one; and consequently, the one being seven years old at his return from *Egypt*, the other must be five. Imagine then, you see these holy children conversing together, and contemplate their conversation in such a manner as the Holy Ghost shall vouchsafe to inspire. What will greatly help your contemplation is, to reflect that this *John* was afterwards that disciple whom *Christ* loved the most, and conversed the most familiarly with.

C H A P. XIII.

Our Lord Jesus remained in Jerusalem.

WHEN our Lord was twelve years old he went up with his parents to *Jerusalem*, according to the law and custom of the festival, which lasted for eight days. Again then, the divine *Jesus* undertakes the labour of a long journey, to honour his heavenly Father on the days consecrated to him: for infinite was the love between the Father and Son. But the joy, which the external pomp and honour paid to his Father gave the holy *Jesus*, fell greatly short of the affliction and bitter anguish of heart he

he felt on account of the many crimes by which sinners dishonoured him. Thus then was the Lord of the law observant of the law; and thus humbly did the Creator of the greatest, mingle with the least of his creatures. When the octave was ended, his parents returning home, he remained in *Jerusalem*. Here, pious reader, be attentive and render yourself present to every thing that passes; you will find the subject equally devout and profitable. I have already told you, that *Nazareth*, the place of *Christ's* abode, is about fifteen miles distant from *Jerusalem*. When therefore in the evening our blessed Lady and St. *Joseph*, who had taken different roads, met at the inn where they were to put up for that night; the Virgin not seeing the child with her spouse, in whose company she expected him to return, immediately asks him: 'Where is the child *Jesus*?' To whom he answers with equal surprise and concern, 'Is he not with you? Alas! I thought he returned in your company, he came not with me, neither know I what is come of him.' Shocked at this unexpected, unlooked for reply, the frightened mother, bursting into a flood of tears, cries: 'No, ah no, he came not with me. Alas, alas, is this the care I should have taken of my child? Is all my tenderness come to this?' Then rushing forth

forth, distracted with anxiety, she runs from house to house, with all the composure so much grief was capable of: 'Tell me, O! neighbours, tell me, have you seen my son? Where is my child? For pity's sake, who has my child? Ah, dearest *Jesus*! where, where art thou? What is come of thee, my dear, my only child?' Thus ran the anxious Virgin from place to place, distracted and lost to comfort amidst her grief and care, the blessed *Joseph* in tears every where following to console her. But what consolation could either of them receive when they found not the divine *Jesus*? What must their sorrow be, especially hers, whose tenderness must be greatest! What could avail the comfort their neighbours, their friends, their relations endeavoured to give them? Can ought compensate the loss of *Jesus*? Do you, therefore, condole with this blessed couple, whose afflictions must be greater than tongue can express. For which of all the troubles they ever suffered could come up to this? Let us not then be discontent, when trouble visits us, since *Jesus* thought not fit to spare his parents. It is his divine permission that afflictions should visit us, they are so many proofs of his love to us, and are calculated for our benefit.

The blessed Virgin, finding all her searches to no purpose, retires sorrowful to her chamber,

chamber, and throwing herself on her knees, with tears of humility mixed with confidence, she thus addresses herself to God her constant refuge and holy comfort: ‘ O God, my Father, my eternal Lord, my all-sweet and benign benefactor! You vouchsafed to bestow your beloved Son upon me, and I, alas, have lost him; nor know I where to seek him. Restore him to me again; oh! restore him to me! Remove, O Father, this bitter heaviness from me, and shew me my Son! I have acted incautiously, but I knew not that I did so. Look not therefore on my negligence, but on the excess of my affliction; and, out of your immense goodness, give me back my Son, without whom life would be a death to me. Oh! where art thou, my dearest Son? What is come of thee? Who enjoys the blessing of cherishing thee in my stead? Art thou returned to Heaven to thy divine Father? For I know thou art the Son of God, and God thyself! Why then didst thou not acquaint me with thy departure, that I might once more have embraced thee in these arms, and pressed these lips to thy divine mouth before I lost thee? Or rather, has not some insidious mortal laid a snare for thee? For I know thou art as truly man, begotten of this flesh of mine. Too well I remember the hurrying thee away

' to *Egypt*, in thy tenderest infancy, to pre-
 ' serve thee from the rage of *Herod*. And
 ' too much, too much I dread, thou art
 ' fallen into the hands of such another ty-
 ' rant. But, oh, may thy heavenly Father
 ' preserve thee from every harm, my dearest
 ' child. Return, oh dearest *Jesus*, to thy
 ' afflicted Mother; or let me know but
 ' where thou art, and I will come to thee!
 ' Forgive this one neglect, and I will never
 ' neglect thee more. When did I ever of-
 ' fend thee, that thou shouldst leave me
 ' thus? I know you are not unacquainted
 ' with the grief that overwhelms me. Oh,
 ' ease me then, my dearest Son, and delay
 ' not returning to me. Did I, ever since I
 ' bore thee, eat, sleep, or live without thee
 ' before? And now I am without thee, not
 ' knowing how. You know you are all my
 ' hope, my life, my joy, and that I cannot
 ' subsist without you. Instruct me then,
 ' where you are, or how I may find you.'

With these and such-like ejaculations, the
 holy Mother of *Christ* soothed her sorrow
 till the next morning, when, by break of
 day, they went forth seeking him round all
 the neighbouring villages; for there were
 many ways from *Jerusalem* to the place
 where they then were. Not finding him
 this day, they went the next day in search
 of him to other places, and along other
 ways,

ways, enquiring among all their friends and relations; and now, not finding him, the afflicted Mother redoubles her fears and anxiety. But the third day returning to *Jerusalem*, they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors. No sooner did the blessed Virgin cast an eye on the beloved Child, than, transported with sudden inexpressible joy, she throws herself on her knees, and with tears of consolation, returns her sincerest thanks to God. The divine Youth, seeing his Mother, came up to her, who, strait clasping him in her arms, pressed, embraced, and sweetly fondled him: now she tenderly prints her kisses on his cheeks, and, holding him at her breast, stands immoveable; unable, as yet, through an excess of tender transport, to speak to him, till the desire of possessing him again in safety, stopped the overflow of joy, and gave her words a vent. Then, looking wishfully on him. ‘Why, ah why, my dearest Child, have you used us thus? With what grief and anxiety have not I and your Father been seeking you!’ ‘Why, (says he) did you seek me? Know you not that it behoves me to attend to my Father’s affairs?’ But this they did not understand the meaning of. The joyful Mother strait informs her Son of her desire to return to *Nazareth*.

‘Son, (says she) it is my desire that we go

‘back to our peaceful home; and will you
 ‘not console me with your company thi-
 ‘ther?’ ‘Yes, O beloved Parent, (replies
 this pattern of obedience) your pleasure shall
 ‘be mine.’ And as he said he acted, re-
 turning with his Parents to *Nazareth*, sub-
 mitting wholly to their will in all things, as
 other children ought to do.

You have beheld then the affliction of the
 blessed Mother on this occasion; and now
 consider the hardships of her divine Son,
 during these three days. Imagine then you
 see him at the door of some poor man,
 craving admittance, where he is received,
 and sparingly helped to eat. Thus the poor
 child *Jesus* delights to associate with the
 poor. Next consider him sitting amidst the
 Doctors; where, with a serene, wise, and
 respectful countenance, he questions them,
 as if he was ignorant of the things he asks:
 all which he does partly out of humility,
 partly not to confound them with the mira-
 culous readiness of his solutions.

Here, likewise, you may consider three
 very remarkable truths. * The first is, That
 whoever wishes to be united to God, must
 not be attached to parents, friends, or rela-
 tions, but renounce them. For *Christ*, when
 he

* Three things worthy notice.

he was intent upon the affairs of his heavenly Father, forsook his beloved Mother, and was not to be found among any of his Relations. The second is, That no one who leads a spiritual life, ought to wonder if he is sometimes in a sterility of devotion, and seems to be forsaken by God, since the same happened to the Mother of God. Let not such persons then be cast down, but seek and endeavour to find him, by persisting in devout meditation, and pious works. The third is, That no one should be tenacious of their own will or purpose; for though our Lord *Jesus* had said, that it was proper for him to attend to the work of his divine Father, yet he changed his purpose, and followed the inclination of his blessed Mother, and accompanied her and her holy Spouse to *Nazareth*; where he remained, submissive to their will. In which you may likewise admire his profound humility, of which we shall take more notice hereafter.

C H A P. XIV.

Our Lord's Life from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of his age.

OUR Lord *Jesus* then returned from the Temple and from *Jerusalem* with his parents to *Nazareth*, and lived under their obedience

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obedience with them till the beginning of his thirtieth year. Nor do we find in sacred scripture any thing he did remarkable during that time. What then shall we admire in him, or conceive him to have done during so great an interval? For if he did any thing worthy admiration, why was it not recorded as well as the rest of his actions? It seems surprisngly strange! But take notice here, that his doing nothing wonderful was a kind of miraculous action. For nothing that attends his life is void of mystery. While he was spending his time in practical virtue, he kept silent, seemingly inactive, and absconded. This sovereign Master then, who was to teach all virtues, and to point out the path of life, began from his youth, by sanctifying in his own person the practice of a virtuous life he came to teach, and that in a private, ineffable manner, unheard of before; that is, appearing in the eyes of the world useless, abject, and simple, as we may devoutly conceive without danger of rashness. Though I do not pretend to affirm any thing of this kind, or any other indeed which is not evidently confirmed by the holy scriptures, or the traditions of the fathers, as I have already signified in the beginning of this work.

Our Saviour then, during this space of time (as we may reasonably conjecture) re-

tired,
concluded

tired, as much as possible, from the company and conversation^{ation} of men; spending much time in the Synagogue, which was the Church of that time, where, in the lowest place, he would remain for a long time recollected in fervent prayer to his divine Father. Thence he would return home to his beloved Mother and her blessed Spouse, whose labour he would often alleviate, by lending a helping hand. He would pass and repass amidst the busy world about him, with an air of as little attention to their affairs, as if he did not see mankind: and these would stupidly wonder that so fine a youth should be seen to do nothing worthy of their praise. For all expected him to make a shining and considerable figure among them. For while he was a boy, he increased equally in age and wisdom in the sight of God and Man. But growing up, from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, he was not remarkable for any actions of probity or manhood above the common sphere: which occasioned a universal surprise; and drew upon him the derision of the public, who used to call him a useless idiot, an insignificant creature, and a stupid mortal; or by such other kind of titles. Neither did he apply to any learning, insomuch that it became a kind of proverb to say that he was but an old minor. Such a life did he lead
and

and persist in, though it brought him into contempt with all men, who looked upon him as mean and contemptible, which he previously foretold of himself by the mouth of his prophet, saying, "I am a worm, and not a man."

You see then, how much our Lord did, seeming to do nothing; he rendered himself mean and despicable to all, as I have already said. And certainly I know no greater or more difficult practice in all the duties of life than this. And they, in my opinion, may be said to have reached the very summit of Christian perfection, who are so far advanced in perfection as to be able totally to overcome the arrogance of their flesh, and truly and unfeignedly to consent to be reputed as nothing, and even contemned as mean and insignificant. A victory over one's self of this nature is greater and more glorious than the sacking a strongly-garrisoned town, according to that of *Solomon*, "The patient man is better than the strong one, and he that conquers his spirit than the conquerer of a city," *Prov. xvi.* Till then you arrive to this point, never flatter yourself that you have done any thing. For, as in reality we are but useless, even when we have done our best, according to the words of *Christ*, till we attain to this degree of humility, we are nothing at all, but

but a vain and empty consistency: which the Apostle very plainly expresses, "Whoever thinks himself to be something, being really nothing, deceives himself." Gal. vi. If you ask why our Lord practised this, I shall answer you, that it was not on his own account, but for your instruction. And therefore, Christian, if you do not profit from so great a lesson, you become excusable. For it is an abomination to see a worm, and the destined food of worms, strutting with arrogance, and vainly raising himself above himself, when the Lord of Majesty deigns to stoop to so abject a degree of humiliation.

If any one should deem it an absurdity to believe that our Lord *Jesus* led for so long a time such a life of seeming inactivity as here mentioned, and is rather disposed to think the Evangelists defective in the accounts they give of him: I answer, in the first place, that the example of so much and so great virtue, cannot properly be called a state of inactivity; since it was the most useful lesson he could give us, as being, properly speaking, the foundation of all virtue. Secondly, it is written in the Gospel of St. *John*, "When the Comforter shall come, the spirit of truth, whom I will send to you from the Father, who proceeds from the Father, he will give testimony of me, and ye shall

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" give

“ give testimony of me, because ye are with
 “ me (that is, in the quality of preachers)
 “ from the beginning.” John xv. And
Peter says, at the election of *St. Matthias*
 the Apostle, “ It is proper out of these
 “ men, &c. from the time of our Lord *Je-*
 “ *sus* entering in among us, beginning from
 “ the baptism of *John*, &c.” Acts i. “ Now
 “ he was then beginning about thirty years
 “ old.” Luke iii. *John* then had not been
 his precursor, had *Jesus* suffered them to
 preach sooner. Besides, if he or they had
 begun their mission sooner, how comes it
 that he was then so little known among his
 neighbours, that they should enquire, “ Is
 “ not this the Carpenter’s Son?” Matth. xiii.
 When, in a very short time after, he was
 commonly called the Son of *David*. If then
 he had begun sooner to do any thing re-
 markable, something of it, at least, would
 have been hinted in Holy Scripture, and all
 the Evangelists had not been so profoundly
 silent about him. This seems to be the opi-
 nion of *St. Bernard*, as I shall hereafter
 quote him. But however the truth of it be,
 I cannot but think it a very pious matter of
 meditation. It is thus the Lord *Jesus* forms
 the sword of humility, as the Prophet fore-
 told him; “ Gird on thy sword upon thy
 “ loins, O most powerful!” Psal. xliv. And
 with what sword was more proper to con-
 quer

quer the infernal Prince of Pride, than with that of humility? For we no-where read of his having engaged him with the weapons of his greatness, but the opposite ones, even at the time of his Passion, when he seemed to stand in need of all his immensity. Hence the same Prophet bemoans him to his heavenly Father, saying, "You have averted from him the help of his sword, and have not assisted him in the battle." Psal. lxxxviii. You see then, Christian reader, how our Lord "began first to do, and then to teach:" Acts i. designing one day to invite you to the imitation of him, with those ineffable words, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble at heart," Matth. xi. This then was the virtue he first chose to practise; and that not in outward shew only, but from the inmost of his heart; for he was truly meek and humble at heart. He was incapable of fiction, and therefore really humbled himself to seem and be mean and abject in the eyes of men; insomuch that even after he began to preach his sublime and heavenly Doctrine, and confirmed it with Miracles, their contempt of him continued, and they would often say of him in derision, "Who is this? Is not this the carpenter's son?" Matth. xiii. With other like scornful expressions. According to this sense then, it appears how truly the Apostle said,

“He exinanated himself taking the form of a servant.” Philip. ii. And not only of a servant, in one sense, by taking human flesh, but in the lowest sense of the word, that is, he took the form of a useless servant, by the lowliness and abject manner of his living.

Would you see how powerfully our Lord put on this sword? Consider every action of his, and you will find humility shining in it in all its lustre. * Do but recollect, and you will find it in every action hitherto taken notice of. And in those which follow, you may observe, that he was so far from neglecting the practice of it, that he increases in humility all his life-time, giving us frequent lessons of it to the hour of his death, and even after death, nay, after his ascension. Did not he towards his end wash his Disciples feet? Was he not extremely humbled by the cross he bore on his divine shoulders? Did he not after his resurrection, when in a glorified state, call his Disciples, Brethren? “Go, says he to *Mary Magdalen*, and tell my Brethren, &c.” John xx. And even after his ascension, did he not converse familiarly with *Paul*, and as humbly, as if he had been his equal? “*Saul, Saul*, why persecutest thou me? Acts ix. Where he

* The extraordinary humility of Christ's actions.

he does not call himself *God* but *me*. And finally, at the great and tremendous day of judgment, will he not, from his majestic and awful tribunal, say, "As long as ye have done it to one of the least of my Brethren, you have done it to me." Matth. xxv.

It was not without reason our Saviour shewed such a love for humility.* He knew that as pride is the foundation of all sin, so humility is the basis of every virtue, and the first step to salvation. It is but a tottering edifice that is not built upon the groundwork of humility. Wherefore, trust not to your chastity, to your poverty, or any other virtue you are possessed of, unless it be accompanied with, and supported by humility. It was *Christ* then that first laid this foundation, and shewed how it is to be acquired, to wit, by villifying and lowering himself in his own esteem, and in the opinion of all the world, and by the uninterrupted exercise of self-humiliation. Go you then, O Christian, and do the like, if you would be perfectly humble as becomes a Christian: for humility, self-contempt, and the practice of lowly and villifying work, must precede all other virtues. In relation to which, thus says St. Bernard: 'Humility, which is obtained by
 humi-

* Why Christ was so fond of humility.

' humiliation, is the basis of all spiritual
 ' structures. For humiliation is as truly
 ' the way to humility, as patience is to
 ' peace, or reading to knowledge. If you
 ' thirst after humility, be not averse to hu-
 ' miliation. For if you cannot stoop to
 ' humiliation, you will never be able to rise
 ' to humility.' And elsewhere: ' Whoever
 ' means to raise himself above himself, must
 ' set out by thinking meanly of himself:
 ' Lest, soaring above his sphere, he fall be-
 ' neath it, for want of being perfectly
 ' grounded in humility. And, as there is
 ' no becoming in reality great, but by the
 ' merit of endeavouring to be little; there-
 ' fore whoever is desirous of rising to per-
 ' fection, must restrain himself by humility,
 ' that humility may raise him.' Wherefore,
 gentle reader, when you see yourself hum-
 bled, rejoice at it, it is a good sign, and an
 argument of approaching grace. " For as
 " the heart is exalted before a fall, so before
 " exaltation it is humbled." Prov. xvi. For
 it is alike written, that " God resists the
 " proud, and gives grace to the humble."
 Jam. iv. And a little farther he adds, ' It
 ' is doing but little to submit to the humi-
 ' liations which come immediate from God,
 ' unless we learn to accept cheerfully those
 ' he is pleased to send us by the means of
 ' his creatures.' Learn an admirable exam-
 ple

ple of this from holy *David*, who, being cursed by a servant, was too much animated with grace to be moved with resentment of the injury, "What is there, says he, betwween me and you, oh Sons of *Sarvia*" 4 Kings xvi. Oh true man according to God's own heart, not moved to indignation or anger, by the scornful reproaches of a slave! Well might he say with a safe conscience; "If I returned evil to those that did evil to me." Psal. vii. Let thus much suffice, at present, of the virtue of humility,

Now let us return to the life and actions of *Christ*, which is and ought to be the mirror of ours, and the principal object of our attention. Be present then, as I have often exhorted you, to all that relates to him. And contemplate that blessed family, small indeed in number, but great in dignity, rich in grace and virtue, but poor and humble in their manner of living. The venerable old man *Joseph* sought with all possible industry, as much employment in his humble profession, as his feeble age would permit him to go through; and our Lady was as diligent at her manual labour, besides the business of her family, which we may suppose was not little, the preparing food for her divine Son, her blessed Spouse, and self, with other domestick fatigues consequential to this, were all done by her, as she

she was too poor to have any servant to help her. Compassionate her therefore on the laborious life she leads; compassionate likewise our divine Lord, who shares with both their most laborious occupations, for "he came "to minister, and not to be ministered to," as he himself says, Matth. xx. Fancy then you see him busied along with his beloved Parents, in the most servile work of their little mansion. Devoutly imagine you see these three sacred Persons sitting at their frugal refecti^ons, not made up of dainties or expensive viands, flattering to the palate and enflaming to the passions; but composed of the coarse and homely provisions usual among the poorest people. What sublime, what heavenly conversation passes between them! No vain, no idle discourse finds admittance there; but every sentence is holy, full of wisdom, and dictated by the Holy Ghost. O ineffable banquet, where the mind is no less substantially nourished than the body! After their meals, all retire to prayers, each to their little separate chambers; our blessed Lady to her's, St. *Joseph* to his, and our Saviour to his. Follow our divine Lord in your mind, and view him devoutly persisting in fervent prayer to his heavenly Father. In this little cell, after spending the greatest part of his nights in heavenly contemplation, he reposes the remaining

maining part on the ground, as meanly as the poorest of his creatures. Thus do you each night endeavour to accompany him in your mind. O! concealed divinity, why do you thus afflict that precious, that innocent body so continually, when the fatigue of one such night might suffice to redeem the whole world? Did the excess of your love urge you to all this? Such was your ardent zeal for the lost sheep you came to convey to heaven on your divine shoulders! Must you, O King of Kings, eternal God, who supply the wants of all, who afford all persons of all stations what is requisite for them; must you, I say, be subject to poverty, meanness and hardship, watching and fasting; and must every circumstance of your life be attended with severity? What then shall become of those who seek nothing but ease, luxury and vanity? Surely we did not learn this kind of empty pursuits from this mortified master! Are we even then wiser than he is? No. He has taught us, both by word and example, humility, poverty, mortification of the flesh, and exercise of the body: let us then improve from the lessons of this sublime teacher, who neither will nor can deceive. And, according to the Apostle's advice, "having food and raiment, let us be content with them." Tim. vi. And make such use of them as de-

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cent necessity requires; but not to superfluity: at the same time, carefully and constantly attending to the spiritual study and exercise of other Christian virtues.

C H A P. XV.

The Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

OUR Saviour, after having lived so painful and abject a life till he was completely twenty-nine years old, when he entered into his thirtieth year, said to his Mother, "The time is now come for me to glorify and manifest my Father, by appearing in the world, and working the Salvation of Man, for which he sent me. Be of good heart therefore, O beloved Mother, for I will soon return to you;" then kneeling to her, as a Man and her Son, the great Master of Humility asks and receives her blessing. Then she to him, as God, kneels, receives his blessing, and tenderly embracing him, with tears, thus says to him: "Go, my blessed son, go with the blessing of your divine Father and mine, be mindful of me, and hasten to return to comfort me." Thus then the blessed *Jesus*, respectfully taking leave of his beloved

loved Mother and her venerable Spouse, sets out from *Nazareth* towards *Jerusalem* by the way of *Jordan*, where he found *Jahn* baptizing. Thus the Lord of the World proceeds alone, for as yet he had no Disciples. View him then attentively, in the presence of God, and see him travelling alone, barefooted, through a long and rugged road, and condole with him. O Lord, whither art thou going and by what ways? Are you not the Sovereign of all the Kings of the Earth? Where then, O Lord, are your nobles, your soldiers, your attendants, and equipage? Where are your guards to keep off the populace from approaching too near your sacred person, as other monarchs are wont to have? Where are the trumpets, the instruments, and royal ensigns? Who goes before to prepare a palace for your reception? Where are all the honours paid to the royal worms of this world? Are not the Heavens and the Earth filled with thy glory? Why then do you proceed thus inglorious? "Do not a thousand thousands pay homage to you in your kingdom above, and millions minister to you?" Dan. vii. Why then do you thus travel alone, a-foot, nay, barefooted? But, ah! the cause is plain: You are not now in your kingdom. "For your kingdom is not of this world." John xviii. "You have

"exinanited yourself, taking the form of a
 "servant." Phil. ii. "You are become as
 "one of us, a way-farer and a stranger!"
 Psalm xxxviii. Like our fathers, you are
 become a servant, that we may become
 kings. You are to conduct us to your own
 kingdom, putting us in the way that leads
 thither. Why then, alas, do we go out of
 it? Why do we not follow you? Why do
 we not humble ourselves, but pursue and
 delight in vain honours, empty pomp, and
 passing enjoyments? It must surely be be-
 cause this is our kingdom, and that we con-
 sider ourselves as natives here, and not as
 pilgrims, otherwise, should we be so much
 taken up here? O senseless sons of men,
 why do you embrace the shadow instead of
 the substance? Why prefer ye the dubious
 and transitory to what is certain and lastingly
 solid? Why so earnest in giving up eternity
 for what is but temporal? Ah, it is too true,
 O Lord, that we forget our being but pil-
 grims and strangers upon earth, else we
 should find no difficulty in following thee.
 We should be content with what is merely
 necessary on the way; and, without burden-
 ing ourselves, or retarding our journey with
 more, follow you, running on after the
 sweet-scented odour of your perfumes, we
 should be free from every load, and looking
 on the transitory things of this life as some-
 thing

thing behind us or out of our way, we should neglect and despise them. Thus then our Lord *Jesus* humbly travels on some days journey, till he arrives at *Jordan*.

When he arrived at *Jordan*, he there found *John* baptising sinners, and a great multitude of people, who were come thither to hear his preaching: for they took him to

be *Christ*. *Jesus* therefore says to him; I intreat you to baptise me along with these people. *John* looking stedfastly on him,

and knowing him in spirit, with fear and reverence answered, 'Lord I myself need

' to be baptised by you.' 'Persist not,

John, (replies *Christ*) but let it be done as I say; for it is expedient that I fulfil all

justice. Conceal, at present, what you know of me, for my time is not yet come.

Baptise me therefore, for now is a time of humiliation, and therefore will I practise humility in its greatest perfection.'

Be mindful then of the practice of humility; but especially here, where we shall treat of it particularly. The gloss of this place

tells us, that there are three degrees in humility. The first is, to be subject to those

above us; and not to prefer ourselves to those who are equal to us. The second is,

to subject ourselves to our equals, and not to prefer ourselves to our inferiors. The

third and most perfect is, to place ourselves beneath

beneath and subject ourselves to our inferiours. This is the degree *Christ* practised on this occasion, and therefore he fulfilled all humility. You may hence observe how considerably *Christ* advanced in humility, by comparing this with the foregoing chapter. There he contented himself with the appearance of a mean and abject, nay, useless servant; here he subjects himself to his own servant, depreciates himself, and extols the other. There he humbly conversed with mankind under the outward appearance of an insignificant; but here his humility is so improved, that he puts on the likeness of a sinner, and is contented to pass for one. For *John* was preaching penance to, and baptizing sinners, yet our humble Lord *Jesus* will be baptised in their presence, nay, in company with them. 'He came (says St. Bernard) amidst a crowd of populace to the baptism of *John*. And he came as one out of the sinful multitude, who was the only one exempt from sin.' To guess, from those about him, who would think him to be the Son of God? Who would take him for the great Lord of Majesty? How great is his humility on this occasion? The same humility indeed appeared at his circumcision, when he likewise took on him the likeness of a sinner; but here it shone forth with greater lustre, in proportion to the greater number of

of spectators. But was there not room to apprehend, that the appearance of a sinner might prejudice him who intended to preach publicly to sinners? Be that as it may, it was not a motive strong enough to hinder this great Master of Humility from profoundly humbling himself. It was his pleasure to seek scorn and self-humiliation, by appearing what he was not, on purpose to leave us a practical instruction. But what use do we make of that instruction, who, on the contrary, put on the likeness of every thing but our real selves, purely to deceive the world, that they may praise and honour us? If we think we possess any good qualities, how solicitous are we to expose them to the eyes of the world; and how indutrious are we, on the other side, to cover all our defects, though ever so conscious of being sinners? Where is the humility of this? Is this the use we make of *Christ's* instruction? In relation to this, hear what *St. Bernard* says: 'There is a humility produced by charity, which helps to kindle it; but there is another humility void of all warmth, which is engendered by self-convicting truth. The latter consists in reflection, the former in affection. For if at the light of truth you look seriously on yourself, without flattery or favour, you cannot help being humbled, and appear-
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ing contemptible in your own eyes, from this true reflection, though you perhaps are unwilling to appear so in the eyes of others. By this means you will be humble indeed by the operation of truth, but not by the infusion of charity. For were your heart as sincerely humbled as your mind is convinced of your deserving to be so, by the light of that truth which has so faithfully given you to yourself, you would doubtless be willing that others should discover in you the deformities which self-conviction has shewn to yourself. Though it must be owned, that it is neither adviseable nor expedient to reveal all that passes within us, and therefore charity and truth jointly forbid us to publish such things of ourselves, as may injure us, or give offence to others. But else, who can doubt of your disregard for truth, if, captivated by self-love, you conceal the truth of your own unworthiness, which you are inwardly convinced of? You prove it sufficiently, by preferring to that truth your own interest and vain honour. And afterwards he adds: If then you are really humble with that true humiliation which truth, the great searcher of hearts, infuses into the soul, add the humility of the will to it, and make a virtue of necessity. For there is no true
virtue

virtue without the consent of the will;
 which will then be effected, if the desire
 of outward esteem in the eyes of your
 neighbour be proportioned to the know-
 ledge you have conceived of the inward
 state of your soul. For otherwise you
 have reason to apprehend, lest the dread-
 ful reproach of *David* be justly applied to
 you. "Because (saith he) he hath done
 deceitfully in his sight, that his iniquity
 may be found unto hatred." *Psal.* xxxv.
 "Weight (saith *Solomon*) and weight—are
 abominable before God." *Prov.* xx.
 What means this? It means, that having
 duly weighed the little value of your own
 merit within your own breast, in the ba-
 lance of equity and truth, you measure it
 outwardly at a different rate, and impose
 yourself upon the world for more value
 than you really are. But fear God, and
 let that fear deter you from the guilt of so
 heinous a crime; that is, of extolling by
 an ambitious will, what truth ought to
 humble within you: for that is opposing
 truth, and struggling against the will of
 God. Chuse rather to acquiesce with him,
 and that your will be ever subject to truth
 by a devout and submissive humility. For
 shall not my soul (saith the royal psalmist)
 be subject to God? *Psal.* lxi. Neither is
 it enough to be subject to God only, unless

'you are likewise the same to all mankind
 'for God's sake; that is, subject to your su-
 'periors, subject to your equals, and subject
 'to your inferiors. In this manner *Christ*
 'teaches us we must fulfil all justice. Go
 'thou then to thy inferior, if thou wilt be
 'perfectly righteous, pay a respect to your
 'inferior, and humbly stoop to those be-
 'neath you.' Thus far *St. Bernard*. Who
 again: 'Who is just (says he) but he that
 'is truly humble? For when the Lord of
 'all things would have humbly stooped to
 'his servant, and submitted to be baptised
 'by the hands of *St. John*: he, awed by
 'the Majesty of his Person, *Christ* spoke
 'thus to him; "Suffer it to be so now,
 "for thus it behoves us to fulfil all righteous-
 "ness." Matth. iii. Placing the accomplish-
 'ment of perfect justice in the perfection of
 'true humility. He therefore that is just, is
 'truly humble: and this justice in the hum-
 'ble, is plain in this; because, he gives to
 'every one his right; he robs not another
 'of his property, but gives honour to God,
 'and retains abjection for himself." But
 'this will appear more plainly if you will but
 'consider the injustice of the proud and ar-
 'rogant, who attribute every good gift of
 'God to the rewards of their own merit. In
 'relation to which *St. Bernard* again speaks:
 'As evil may take its source from the greatest
 'good,

good, when become great, we make use of
 the divine gifts as if they were not such,
 without even making God an acknow-
 ledgment for them; so they, who seem to
 have reached the highest degree of gran-
 deur and greatness, on account of the di-
 vine benefits they have received, are in
 truth excessively little, for want of return-
 ing the thanks due to their supreme bene-
 factor. However, gentle reader, I have
 spared the weakness of your senses in the
 softening expressions of *great* and *little*.
 Out of regard to the tenderness of your
 ears, I have forborne calling things by the
 real names I think they deserve. I should
 have said, very *wicked*, and very *good*.
 For it is beyond all dispute, that they are
 so much the deeper in wickedness, who as-
 cribe to themselves the excellencies they
 may possess. Nothing, in short, can be
 more criminal. But should any one say, be
 this crime far from me, since I know it is
 the grace of God that makes me what I
 am, and yet, at the same time, studiously
 aim at self-praise for the grace which he
 has received; Is not such a one a thief and
 a robber? Hear only what he is from the
 mouth of truth itself. "From thy own
 mouth will I judge thee, O wicked ser-
 vant." Luke xix. And what indeed can
 be more execrably wicked than that ser-

vant who usurps to himself the praises due to his Lord? Thus St. *Bernard* and I

Hence you may see that the perfection of all righteousness consists in true humility, which derogates nothing from God's honour, nor attributes that to itself, which is not its due; neither does it injure our neighbour. For the truly humble is neither rash in judging him, nor prefers himself to any; but rather thinks himself inferior to all mankind, and chuses the lowest place among them. Hence St. *Bernard* again thus says; "How dost thou know, O mortal, but that the very man whose flagitious life and infamous conduct you look upon with horror and contempt, deeming him the greatest of reprobates, and infinitely more sinful than yourself, who live, or at least seem to yourself to live a sober, virtuous, or pious life: how dost thou know, I say, but that very man may become not only better than those or than yourself in his future practices, and be even now, perhaps, dearer in the sight of God than you: and therefore how do you know but it may be contrary to the divine pleasure for us to place him beneath ourselves, or to refuse him the first honours among us? Chuse thou (saith *Christ*) the lowest place, to wit, that you alone may be the lowest of all, and not only not prefer yourself, but even not
" presume

"I presume to compare yourself to any."
 Thus saith St. Bernard. The virtue of hu-
 mility is again many ways recommended to
 us by authentic applauses of the same Saint.
 A great mother indeed is humility (saith he)
 and a most sublime virtue, which earns that
 for us, which we are taught not to aspire
 to, enabling us to attain to the knowledge
 we cannot learn, and to conceive of and
 from the holy WORD sublime mysteries
 not to be explained by words. And why
 so? Not on the account of merit, so much
 as of the divine pleasure of the eternal Fa-
 ther of the WORD, the Spouse of the
 Soul, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God,
 blessed above all things created. And
 again: Humility is a virtue, by which a
 mankind, through a perfect knowledge of
 his own unworthiness, becomes mean in
 his own sight. And in another place:
 The virtue of humility alone can repair
 the crime of a breach of charity: and in-
 deed only that virtue is unaccustomed to
 vain boasting, a stranger to pride, and not
 given to contention. For he that is truly
 humble, argues not in judgment, nor dis-
 sembles any justice. And farther: Hu-
 mility reconciles us with God, and pleaseth
 him greatly when we possess it. Again:
 Humility has ever been a special virtue, in-
 timately annexed to the divine grace. For
 it

it is ever customary with sacred piety, for the sake of preserving humility, to require that the more we advance in perfection, the less perfect we should think ourselves. For even they, who are advancing to the supreme degree of spirituality, retain still something of the imperfections of the lowest, insomuch that they cannot perceive themselves to have attained even the verge of it. A beautiful composition is humility and virginity. Neither is that soul little pleasing in the sight of God, in which humility is an ornament to virginity, and virginity adorns humility. What praise is she not worthy of, in whom fertility exalts humility, and a birth renders sacred virginity? You have here before you a lesson concerning both the virgin, and the humble. And if you cannot imitate the virginity of the one, imitate at least the humility of the other. Virginity is a laudable virtue: but humility much the more necessary: that, is a counsel; this, a precept: to that, you are invited; to this, you are obliged. Of that, it is said; "He that can take, let him take." Matth. xix. But of this; "Unless you become as this little one, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Ibid. xviii. That, therefore, you are rewarded for; and this, is expected from you. Wherefore, you may
be

'he saved without virginity; but without
 'humility you cannot: for where virginity
 'lost, has no more the power to please, the
 'tears shed for it by humility may effec-
 'tually do it. And without rashness, I may
 'say, that the virginity of the sacred Virgin
 'herself would not have been pleasing to
 'God, without humility. For, "Upon
 "whom shall my spirit rest (saith the Lord)
 "but upon the humble and serene?" Had
 'not then the holy Virgin been humble,
 'the Holy Ghost had not rested upon her;
 'and had not the divine Spirit overshadowed
 'her, undoubtedly she would not have been
 'pregnant. For how indeed without him,
 'could she have conceived by him? It is
 'clear then that, when she conceived by the
 'Holy Ghost, as herself witnesseth, the Lord
 'regarded the humility of his handmaid
 'more than her virginity. Whence it fol-
 'lows beyond dispute; that it is humility
 'which renders virginity acceptable. What
 'reply can the virgin vainly elated make to
 'this? Our blessed Lady, having as it were,
 'forgot her virginity, glories only in the
 'abjection of her humility, and you, ne-
 'glecting this, vainly flatter yourself in the
 'possession of an unavailing virginity?
 "He beheld (saith she) the humility of his
 "handmaid." 'She. What she? Truly
 'the holy, the pious, and the devout Vir-
 'gin

And are you more innocently
 pure, more fervently devout than she? Or
 can you presume to think that your chastity
 is greater or more pleasing to God than
 hers? so as to be able to please without hu-
 mility by that which she could not do by
 her own? How much the more honoura-
 ble thy condition is rendered by the gift of
 chastity: so much the more do you injure
 yourself, as often as you soil that innocence
 of life, with the mixture of pride. Charity,
 chastity and humility, have no beauty in
 themselves, but only in proportion to the
 beauty they have in the sight of God.
 What is more beautiful than that chastity
 which renders clean the being conceived
 from uncleanness, changes enmity into
 friendship, and men into angels? The
 angel and the chaste man differ indeed
 in point of felicity, but not of virtue. For
 if the chastity of the one be happier, that
 of the other is stronger. It is chastity alone
 which in this mortal state represents a kind
 of immortality. That alone, which, a-
 midst the nuptial solemnities, imitates the
 method of that blessed and heavenly region
 where they neither marry nor are married,
 giving us an imperfect relish of the divine
 and heavenly conversation there enjoyed
 among the blessed. This frail vessel which
 here we carry with us, and in which we
 are

are often in danger, chastity sanctifies, not
unlike the sweet scented balsams wherewith
dead bodies being embalmed are preserved
from incorruption. It curbs the senses,
restrains the faculties of the body, and pre-
serves the whole man from corruption and
loose desires attending idleness. But what-
ever beauty that may appear from the
gaining ornament of chastity, this however,
is of no value or merit without charity.
Nor ought we to wonder at this. For
what good indeed can we receive without
it? Not faith, though we should remove
mountains. Not knowledge, though it
be that which speaks with the tongues of
angels. Not martyrdom, though by it I
should deliver up my body, saith St. Paul,
to be burnt. Neither without it can we
receive any good, nor with it can we re-
ject it, though the minutest. Chastity
without charity is like a lamp without oil.
Extract away the oil, and the lamp will not
burn. So take away charity, and chastity
will not please. In a word, as chastity
avails us nothing without charity, so nei-
ther the one nor the other avail any thing
without humility, nor can they be truly
called virtues. For it is by humility that
we deserve the possession of them both,
because to the humble God gives grace.
Humility preserves those virtues which we
have

have already acquired; for the Spirit of God reposes only upon the humble and peaceful: it perfects that virtue we are steady in; for virtue is perfected in infirmity, that is, in humility. It conquers pride, that implacable enemy to grace, that source of all iniquity, and rids itself, as well as others, from its insolent tyranny. That alone powerfully resists its malice, and subdues its presumption, being a kind of bul-wark and asylum of virtue." Thus far, gentle reader, have I given you many and beautiful commendations of humility from St. Bernard, that great lover of truth and abjection. Endeavour likewise to comprehend the sublime doctrines he gives relating to other virtues, and practise them; but now let us return to the baptism of our Lord.

When John beheld then, that it was the will of our Lord to be baptised by him, he readily submitted to it, and baptised him. And here now, pious reader, cast an eye towards him, and attentively behold, how the Lord of Majesty humbly uncloaths himself like any meer mortal, and notwithstanding the extreme rigour of the season descends thus into the frozen river. Thro' the immense love he bore us he vouchsafed thus to work our salvation, by instituting the sacrament of baptism to wash away the guilt
of

of our crimes. By this he truly espoused to himself not only his whole church, but more especially in a singular and ineffable manner, the souls of the faithful. For by the faith we promise him in our baptism, we are truly wedded to our Lord *Jesus*, the holy prophet saying in his person: "I will espouse thee to myself in faith." *Hosea ii.* Wherefore is this most solemn and ineffable mystery, a work of the greatest service and benefit to mankind; And therefore the holy church triumphantly sings: "This day the church is united to her heavenly spouse: because *Christ* in the river *Jordan* washed away her crimes." And in this most excellent work the three divine persons of the most sacred Trinity, in a singular manner, manifested themselves, and descended: "For the Holy Ghost, as a dove, came and remained upon him, and the voice of the Father was heard, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." *Matt. iii.* In which place, saith *St. Bernard*: "He said, "Hear ye him." Wherefore, saith the Saint: "Begin then now to speak, Oh beloved *Jesus*, since thou art now commissioned to speak from thy Father himself. How long, oh divine virtue, and wisdom of God, how long, I say, will you lie concealed amidst mankind, and appear only

' only invested with the infirmities of a pure
 ' mortal, and insignificant man? How long,
 ' O glorious king, and king of heaven, will
 ' you suffer yourself to be called the carpen-
 ' ter's Son, and even vouchsafe to be
 ' thought so? For the holy evangelist St.
 ' *Luke* witnesseth, that "He was still
 ' "thought the Son of *Joseph*." *Luke* iii.
 ' Oh humility of *Christ*! How greatly dost
 ' thou confound the excess of my vanity; I
 ' scarce know any thing, and yet flatter
 ' myself to know much, and never know
 ' when, or how to be silent; but without
 ' shame, being indiscreetly forward, and
 ' full of vain boasting, I am quick in talk-
 ' ing, ready in teaching, and slow in heark-
 ' ening to others. But when *Christ* re-
 ' mained silent during so long a space of
 ' time, and hid the treasures of his divine
 ' wisdom from mankind, was it, think you,
 ' because he feared the assaults of vain-glory
 ' from the empty praises of men? What had
 ' he to fear from that who was the true
 ' glory of his Father? He feared however,
 ' but his fear was not for himself, but for
 ' us: he was afraid for us, well knowing
 ' the room there was for such fear. For us
 ' he was careful, us he instructed more by
 ' works than by words, and what he after-
 ' wards taught us by word, he proclaimed
 ' by example: "Learn of me because I
 ' am

"am meek and humble of heart." Matth. xi. and We hear of very little before concerning the infancy of *Jesus Christ*, and now to the three and thirtieth year of his age, we hear of nothing he either did or said. However, from this time he can no longer remain concealed, being thus publickly declared by his Father. Thus much St. Bernard. And this is the authority which I adduced in the foregoing chapter, from which you may gather how our Lord *Jesus* humbly remained silent so long a space of time for our greater spiritual instruction. And you cannot but observe, in the whole series of what has been already said, the true practice of a profound humility, concerning which, I cannot speak to you but with pleasure, it being a most sublime virtue, and what we stand greatly in need of. And is with so much the more study to be sought, and admired with so much the greater affection, by how much the more our Lord in every action of his life was remarkably solicitous of practising it.

C H A P. XVI.

The fast and temptations of Christ. His return to his mother. The four means to attain to a perfect purity of heart. The great advantages of prayer. The resistance to be made to gluttony. Why and for whom God works his miracles.

OUR divine Lord Jesus, immediately after his baptism, retired into the Wilderness, to a certain mountain known by the name of the *Quarantain Peak*, and there fasted forty compleat days and nights; conversing (according to St. Mark) with the brutes. Here then, again contemplate your divine Master; and endeavour to copy from this sublime pattern, the many excellent virtues he points out to you in his own practice. To be solitary and retired from the eyes of the world, is his greatest ambition; a rigorous abstinence from food is his daily repast; prayer, and almost uninterrupted watches, are his darling exercise; short, and interrupted slumbers, on the hard, cold, bare ground, are his slender repose; and the humble society of brute beasts, are all his company. Though the whole life of *Christ* will appear to have been one continued series of pain and corporal suffering:

yet

yet here it seems to be attended with the most afflicting circumstances; and therefore deserves a particular share of your compassion. Pity him then, and let your pity excite in you a zealous resolution of sharing his hardships, by following the example he here sets you. Four things in this passage are principally to be remarked, which are jointly and mutually conducive to the spiritual exercise of every pious soul; to wit, retirement, fasting, prayer, and mortification of the flesh. And it is chiefly by these that we are to hope to obtain that perfect purity of heart, which cannot be too much coveted, as it includes the possession of every virtue. For purity of heart contains charity, humility, and patience; in a word, an assemblage of every virtuous quality, and an absolute alienation from vice, and all its tendencies: because the heart that gives admittance to any one vice, or even suffers in itself the decay of any one virtue, from that moment, ceases to be pure. Hence, as we are told in the conferences of the Holy Fathers of the Desert, the whole object of spiritual exercise is, and should be, the acquisition of a perfect purity of heart. For it is by this that every man is to render himself worthy the beatifical vision, as our Lord himself says in the gospel: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

Where-

Wherefore, *St. Bernard* says: 'That he is the nearest to God, whose heart is the most purified.' The natural consequence of which truth is; that to reach to an intimate union with God, we must have a perfect purity of heart.

Now, towards obtaining this, gentle reader, fervent and assiduous prayer is of the greatest service; as I shall hereafter shew you. But what can avail the prayer of one given to gluttony, infobriety, indelicacy, and sloth? Nothing. No; fasting, and mortification of the flesh are absolutely requisite. Though prudence is necessary in the practice of both, indiscretion is the bane of every good action.

Neither does retirement seem of less utility. For, amidst noise and tumult, how can prayer be performed with that decency which is proper to it? And who is the mortal so free from danger that dares give a loose to his senses, particularly to seeing and hearing much, without offence to his purity or innocence of heart? "Death enters by the windows (of our eyes) to our souls." And therefore, gentle reader, follow our Lord to his retirement: that is, separate yourself, after his example, from the commerce of the world; and be as retired as your station will permit, if you wish to be united to him, and enjoy that beatifical vision

vision which is the reward of internal cleanliness. Fly the conversation of all, but more especially of worldlings; fly the novelty of friendships, even devout ones; shut your eyes and ears to all vain and transitory objects; and fly, above all, as the most destructive poison to the soul, all that may in the least disturb the peace of your mind or breast. It was not without reason, that the Fathers, for their habitations, made choice of Deserts, and places remote from all correspondence with mankind, and recommended to all their pupils to be blind, deaf, and dumb to the conversation of the world. For (as St. Bernard says to this purpose) if you are desirous of becoming sensible of the sweet emotions of the Holy Ghost, if you have an effectual eagerness to have your soul wedded to God, according to the Prophet, "sit down solitary, and you have raised yourself above yourself," by the bare desire of espousing the Lord of Angels. In reality, is it not above your native meanness to adhere to God, and to become one spirit with him? Sit down therefore, and be solitary as the turtle: avoid the crowds, and have no dealings as you can avoid, with the rest of mankind: forget even your country, and the house of your father; and the King shall be desirous of your beauty." Endeavour then,

then, oh pious soul, to be alone, that you
 may keep yourself wholly to him, whom
 you have wholly chosen to yourself. Re-
 tire from the public; retire from your
 own family; retire from your most inti-
 mate friends, and even from your neces-
 sary attendants. For know, that such is
 the reservedness of your divine Spouse,
 that he will never indulge you with his
 company in the presence of others. With-
 draw then, but not so much bodily as
 mentally. Withdraw, but let it be in in-
 tention, in spirit, and with devotion. For
Christ your Lord, who is present with
 you, is so in spirit; and the retirement
 he expects from you, is not so much that
 of the body as that of the spirit. Though
 indeed, it will not be useless for you to re-
 tire personally sometimes, if convenience
 will permit; especially at the time of
 prayer, (as we shall hereafter observe.)
 You may truly be said to be retired and
 alone, if your thoughts are not employed
 on trivial things, if you are not affected
 by what passes in company, if you con-
 temn what the world prize, if you are
 fatigued with what your worldly compa-
 nions hanker after, if you are insensible
 to ill-usage, and mindless of injuries:
 Otherwise, you cannot be truly deemed
 solitary, however personally alone you
 may

may chance to be. (You see then, that it is not impossible to be retired, amidst a croud; or to be amidst a tumult, though alone in a Desert. Thus then, however great be the number of people you converse with, you may still be alone if you will but refrain from curious searching into their conversation, or rashly setting up for a judge of it.) Thus far *St. Bernard*. Hence appears how necessary solitude is, and how fruitless is that of the body, if unaccompanied with that of the mind. However, I must still observe, that corporal retirement is of the greatest service, that the mind may not lose its recollection, by exterior objects. Endeavour therefore, with all due affection and discretion, to imitate, as much as possible, your divine Lord and Spouse, in the great and useful virtues of solitude, prayer, fasting, and corporal mortification.

Learn likewise, from his conversing with dumb creatures, to behave yourself humbly towards all, and to bear with meekness even such as appear to you guilty of misbehaviour. To this end, pay often a mental visit to our Lord in his retirement, and observe his manner of conversing there. Every faithful Christian ought to repeat this visit at least once a day, from Twelfth-day to the end of his forty days retreat: when (as the

Scripture takes notice) he began to be hungry. It was this opportunity Satan laid hold of to approach him, and try to find out if he was the Son of God, by tempting him to gluttony. "If (says he) thou art the Son of God, bid these stones be made bread." But this artifice could not surprise the Master of all Wisdom, who so rejected it, as neither to be affected by the temptation of gluttony; nor leave the Tempter room to discover what he wished to know; rebuking him with holy Scripture, without asserting or denying himself to be the Son of God. Here let the example of *Christ* teach you the duty of resisting the passion of gluttony; which is the first victory we ought to begin by, if we mean to gain a compleat triumph over sin. The man who is overcome by gluttony, is too weak to cope with any other vice. For, as the commentator upon this passage in *St. Matthew* says, "He labours in vain to gain a proper dominion over his vicious appetites, who remains a slave to his own belly." The Devil, not discouraged by this defeat, took our Saviour up to *Jerusalem*, our divine Lord suffering himself to be carried about by the cruel Serpent, who thirsted after his precious blood, as well as after that of his Elect, and patiently enduring such rough treatment to set us an example of meek-

meekness. Attend, therefore, seriously to the lesson here set you, and profit by it. When Satan had brought our Saviour to *Jerusalem*, he carried him to the pinnacle of the Temple, there to tempt him to vanity: desirous, as before, of discovering whether he was the Son of God or not. But here again our Saviour frustrated his intentions, contenting himself with confounding the Serpent by authority of Scripture. So that, according to St. Bernard, 'Our Saviour's not manifesting his divinity on these two occasions, was a sufficient argument with the infernal Enemy to conclude, that he was meet man: and therefore it was, that he ventured a third time to try to shake that steadiness which appeared to him to be purely human.' Accordingly the Fiend took him to a high mountain, at a little distance from the above-named peak, where, shewing him the riches of the world, he endeavoured to seduce him to avarice; but, to his utter confusion, the Destroyer was again disappointed, and put to flight. See then, and remember what trials and usage your divine Lord submitted to, and cease to wonder that you should be tempted also.

Yet think not, pious reader, that these were the only trials he endured. They who reckon but three temptations in the life of *Christ* must surely be ignorant of Scripture, which

which tells us that ¹⁶ "The whole life of man upon earth is one continued temptation." ^{Job vii} And that, he endured in the most rigorous manner. For, as *St. Paul* says, he was ¹⁷ "tempted in all, by similitude" to us, though his temptation were but external; and ¹⁸ "without sin." When he had gained the victory, the angels came and ministered to him. Here be attentive, and devoutly behold our Lord eating, surrounded by the angels who attend him; and endeavour to be present to every thing that is here mentioned, the subject being very beautiful, and equally devout. Here it may be asked, what the angels ministered to our Lord to eat after so long and rigorous a fast? This the Scripture makes no mention of, and therefore we may dispose this victorious banquet as our devotion shall inspire us. If indeed we consider the greatness of his power, the question is solved; because, at pleasure, he could have commanded what he pleased out of all that was created, or might have created afresh, whatever he had conceived a liking for. But though he made use of this power in behalf of the multitudes whom he fed twice with a small number of loaves and fishes, yet we nowhere find that he ever exerted it for his own, or Disciples use. To the contrary, we read, that in his presence, the Disciples were reduced to pluck
cars

ears of corn to stay their hungry appetites. So likewise, when fatigued with his journey, he sat at the well talking with the Samaritan, it is not said that he created food, but that he sent his Disciples to fetch some from the neighbouring city. So that it is not likely that *Christ* was fed in the Desert by any miracle, for his miracles were all wrought in public, and in the presence of many. Yet there were none here present with him but angels; what then can we find to meditate on? There were no dwellings here, nor any viands to be found ready prepared; so that we may conceive that the angels brought thither the food they found elsewhere prepared. And why may we not believe it to have been so, when the like happened to *Daniel*? For when the prophet *Abacuc*, Dan. xiv. had prepared the pottage for his reapers, an angel of the Lord took him by the hair of the head to *Daniel*, from *Judea* to *Babylon*, that he might eat, and then brought him back. Let us then piously meditate, and rejoice with our divine Lord at his victorious dinner, and with the blessed Virgin, who bore a part in his joy, though distant from him, for we may reasonably conjecture, that the heavenly Hosts, who came to pay their homages to our divine Saviour after his victories over Satan, finding him pressed with hunger,

hunger, went, in his name, to the blessed Virgin, his Mother, and brought from her the necessary food of her own preparing, which they respectfully laid before him to eat. And with what love, honour and devotion, may we not suppose they administered every thing to him: one presenting him bread, another helping him to drink, another obsequiously tendering to him the fish, or other humble provision his blessed Mother had dressed for him: And all jointly recreating him with heavenly music, and divine canticles. This done, our divine Lord dismisses them to their celestial habitation, descends from the mountain, and prepares to return to his blessed Mother to console her. And here, again, behold the Lord of all things, undertaking another laborious journey on foot; and condole with him. He came by the way of *Jordan*, where *John*, beholding him advancing forwards, pointed him out with his finger, crying out at the same time, "Behold the Lamb of God: behold him who takes away the sins of the world." *John*. i. "It is he, it is he himself, on whom I saw the Holy Ghost descending, when I baptised him." And again the next day, seeing him walk by the side of *Jordan*, he cried out a second time, "Behold the Lamb of God." Then *Andrew*, with another of *John*'s Disciples, went after

after *Jesus*: and our divine Lord, anxious of their salvation, to give them the greater confidence in him, turned about to them, and asked, "Whom do you seek?" To which they returned, "Where, Lord, is your habitation?" He then took them with him to the little house he had retired to in those parts; and they staid with him the whole day. After this, *Andrew* brought with him his brother *Peter*, whom *Jesus* courteously received; knowing well what he designed him to be. He then told him, that he should afterwards be called *Cephas* or *Peter*; and thus they became acquainted, and in some measure intimate. Afterwards, *Jesus* having a mind to go into *Galilee* to his blessed Mother, he left those parts, and sat out on his journey.

When he returned home, his holy parents were transported with inexpressible joy: the sacred Virgin ran to embrace him, and received him in her tender and immaculate arms; to whom, and to her venerable Spouse, the divine *Jesus*, reverently inclining, returned his tender expressions of joy with mutual tenderness, and remained with them, as he used to do.

C H A P. XVII.

Christ's opening the book in the Synagogue.

THUS far, by the grace of God, we have regularly treated the passages of the life of *Christ*, without omitting any, or at least very few circumstances that may be supposed to have attended him: but I do not design to continue the same hereafter. For it would be too prolix to reduce into practical meditations every thing he said and did: Besides, it ought to be our chief study, after the example of *St. Cecily*, to bear in our breasts the facts relating to him. Wherefore, for the future, I shall only collect some of the principal facts to meditate assiduously on, till we come to his Passion; for there, nothing ought to be omitted. Neither ought we elsewhere to omit any thing wholly, or to neglect meditating on it in a proper place and time. But I do not intend to be so extensive in meditations henceforward, unless it be very seldom. Let it suffice to place before your eyes the bare facts and sayings, on which you yourselves may, at leisure, piously and familiarly meditate. For in this seems to consist the chief sweetness, efficacy, and fruit of these meditations; that, always and everywhere, you contemplate *Christ* in some one action,

action, or saying of his; as, when he is with his Disciples, when he is with sinners, when he talks or preaches to the multitude, walking or sitting, sleeping or waking, eating himself, or ministering to others, healing the sick, or doing other miracles. In these, and such-like circumstances, consider all his gestures; but especially contemplate his divine countenance, if you can bring it to your imagination, which however appears to me the most difficult part of meditation. When you are thus contemplating the divine face of *Christ*, consider whether he looks graciously upon you; your conscience will tell you whether you may hope it or not. Let what has been said in this chapter serve you to recur to in whatever I may hereafter relate without adding any meditations to it. But let us proceed to the remaining part of this blessed Life.

After our Lord *Jesus* returned from being baptised, he persisted in his accustomed humility; beginning however, by degrees, to manifest himself in teaching and preaching in a private manner. For he is not said to have taken on him the function of a public preacher during the whole following year, that is, not till the miracle he wrought at the marriage-feast, which was on the day twelve-months after he was baptised. And tho' he did sometimes preach, and suffer his

Disciples to baptize, yet, till after the imprisonment of the Baptist, he did not, either by himself, or his Disciples, wholly apply to preaching, especially in public. Even in this, giving us a lesson of surprising humility, by paying such respect to *John*, who was so greatly inferior to him in preaching, as well as in every thing else. He did not begin his mission with noise and ostentation, but humbly and gradually.

One day therefore, being with the rest of the *Jews* in the Synagogue, he stood up, and read in the book of *Isaiah*, the following words: "The spirit of the Lord's upon me, wherefore he has anointed me, he has sent me to evangelize to the poor." *Isaiah* lxi. Then folding the book, "this Scripture is this day fulfilled (said he) in your ears." Behold him then here humbly taking upon him the office of a lecturer to them, and reading before them, with an affable and serene countenance: Thus he lays the Scripture open to their understandings, and begins humbly to manifest himself in those words, "this Scripture is this day fulfilled," that is, in other words, "I am he who is here spoken of." While he was speaking, the whole astonished multitude dwelt on the humble modesty and beauty of his heavenly aspect, which added efficacy to the divine words he spoke; for he was exceedingly

ingly beautiful, and inexpressibly eloquent,
Of both which the Prophet thus sung:
"Beautiful of form above the children of
men; grace is diffused in thy lips."
Psalm xliv.

CH A P. XVIII.

His calling his Disciples.

AND now our Lord Jesus began to call his Disciples, and to solicit the salvation of our race; still preserving unhurt, his former humility. *Peter* and *Andrew* were the first he called; and them he called three times. The first time of his calling them was (as above) near the river *Jordan*, where they first came a little acquainted with him; *John* i. The second was from the ship, when they had been catching fish, as *St. Luke* relates; *Luke* v. Then they followed him only with a design of returning home; but then they heard some part of his doctrine. The third was likewise from the ship, when, according to *St. Mark*, he said to them, "Come after me, I will make you fishers of men." *Mark* i. "Then, leaving their nets, they followed him." *Ibid*. So likewise he called *James* and *John*, at the same

same places, the two last times; and what relates to them, is contained in the same places where *Peter* and *Andrew* are treated of. He called also *St. John* at the marriage-feast, as *St. Jerom* says, though it is not mentioned in Scripture. He called *St. Philip*, saying, "follow me." *John* i. And so he did *Matthew*. *Matth.* ix. As to his manner of calling the rest, it is no-where written. Consider here then, and behold him in the before-mentioned vocations, and in his conversation with them; with what affection he calls them, rendering himself affable, familiar, and sociable with them; attracting them inwardly and outwardly, bringing them to his Mother's, and frequently condescending to go with them to their houses. He taught them, instructed them, and was equally careful of them as a mother is of an only son. It is said, as a tradition from *St. Peter's* verbal account, that whenever he slept, at the same place with them, if, rising in the night to pray according to his custom, he found any of them slightly covered, he would graciously take the pains to wrap them up warm, having an extraordinary tenderness for them. For though they were but men of mean extraction and condition, yet he knew what he had designed them for, and that they were to be the princes of the world, and the appointed leaders of all his faithful in the spiritual

spiritual war to be waged against Satan. And here, for God's sake, consider from what small beginnings the Church took its rise. The Lord would not make choice of the wise and powerful of this world, lest the wonders he was about to perform should be ascribed to their abilities; but reserving these prodigies to himself, redeemed us out of the abundance of his own goodness, power, and wisdom.

C H A P. XIX.

The conversion of water into wine at the marriage-feast.

THOUGH it be uncertain whose marriage this was that was celebrated at *Cana of Galilee*, as the ecclesiastical history takes notice; let us however, for meditation sake, suppose it to be of St. *John* the Evangelist, which St. *Jerom* seems to affirm in his preface upon St. *John*. Our blessed Lady was there present, not as a stranger invited thither, but as the head, and principal lady of the feast, and the chief manager of it; so that she was as it were at home, being in the house of her sister, whose elder she was. This may be gathered, first, from the text, which tells us, that the Mother of *Jesus* was there,

there, but that *Jesus* and his Disciples were invited thither; which ought to be understood likewise of all the rest of the persons present. So that when *Mary Salome*, the wife of *Zebedy*, came to her to *Nazareth* to tell her that she designed to marry her son *John*, our blessed Lady went back with her to *Cana* some days before the appointed time of the feast, to make preparations for it, inasmuch that when the guests were invited to it, she was actually there. Secondly, it may be gathered from her taking notice of the want of wine; by which she appears not so much to be a guest, as concerned in the distribution of the entertainment, and therefore perceived the wine to be deficient. For if she had been sitting there as a guest, would the modest Virgin have sat, think you, by her Son, amidst the men? And if she had, would she have risen up among them to complain of the want of wine? Or even had she been seated among the women, had she, think you, been more sensible of the want of wine than any other of her sex there present? Or would she have risen from her seat to acquaint her Son with it? for we cannot suppose, that she called out aloud. All this seems improbable; and therefore we may more probably suppose, that she was present there, not merely as a guest, but rather as one who served and ministered as before-

before-mentioned; for it is said of her: that she was ever ready and officious in helping and serving others.

The *third* is, that she commanded the servants to go to her Son, and to do whatever else she appointed them: by which it is plain, that she had a superiority over them, and that the feast was ordered and disposed according to her management; and therefore she was solicitous, lest any thing necessary should be wanting. Hence then, according to this manner, consider our Lord *Jesus* at this feast, eating with the rest of the company, seated not at the head of the guests, nor amongst the chiefest of those who were invited, but in the lowest place, and among the poorest and meanest sort, as we may gather from his own words. "When thou art invited to a feast, sit down in the lowest place." *Luke xiv.* Wherefore, as it was ever his custom to teach first by example, what he afterwards taught by words, it is most likely, that he took not the first and chiefest place at this feast, after the manner of the proud and vain; but rather, that he chose to sit in the lowest seat, among the more simple and meaner sort of the company. Contemplate here likewise our blessed Lady; how obsequious and cheerful she is, and how diligently careful that all things might be performed

formed with great exactness and decency; submissively helping the servants, and shewing them how, and of what things they should serve and minister to those who were invited. And when the feast was almost towards the end, they came to her, and said: 'There is no more wine left to set before them.' To whom she answered; 'Expect a short time, and I will procure that you may have more.' And presently departing, she went to her Son *Jesus*, who sat humbly at the lower end of the table, and said to him: 'My Son, they have no wine, and this, our Sister, being poor, I know not how we shall supply this want.' But *Jesus* made answer, and said: 'Woman, what is this to me and thee?' This answer could not but seem severe to the holy Virgin. But as *St. Bernard* remarks, 'those words were full of mystery, and were given for our greater instruction.'

Wherefore, the Saint, in this place, speaks to this effect: 'Dost thou ask, O Lord, what is this to thee and to her? Is it nothing to the Mother and her Son? Do you ask what it appertains to her, when thou thyself art the blessed fruit of her virginal womb? Is she not the same who conceived without offence to her modesty, and brought forth without prejudice to her virginity? Is it not she, in
' whose

' whose womb you vouchsafed to be inclosed
 ' the space of nine months, whose sacred
 ' breasts gave thee suck, and with whom,
 ' at the age of twelve years, you came back
 ' from *Jerusalem*, and was obedient to her?
 ' Why then, most beloved *Jesus*, dost thou
 ' now perplex and grieve her tender soul,
 ' saying: What is it to me and to thee, O
 ' woman? I already comprehend that it
 ' was not to reproach her, or to confound
 ' the great modesty of thy virgin Mother,
 ' which made you say: Woman, what is
 ' that to me and to thee? For when the
 ' servants came to thee by her orders, you
 ' did without hesitation what she suggested.'

' Why then, gentle reader, did he first
 ' here make her this answer? Truly for no
 ' other reason but for our instruction, and
 ' to teach us that they, who having forsaken
 ' the world by a thorough conversion to
 ' Almighty God, should have no longer a
 ' tie to their carnal friends, relations, or
 ' parents; and that an over solicitude for
 ' the supplying their necessities should not
 ' deter them from the daily study and prac-
 ' tice of those spiritual exercises belonging
 ' to their state and calling. For tho' as
 ' long as we are of the world there is a duty
 ' incumbent upon us, in regard to the care
 ' of our parents; yet, when we have once
 ' forsaken it, so far as even to forsake our-

‘ selves with it, much more ought we to re-
‘ linquish all temporal care and solitude for
‘ them. To which purpose, it is written
‘ of a certain holy Monk or Hermit, who
‘ having quitted the world, and lived a
‘ long time a solitary and retired life in the
‘ Desert, being one day earnestly entreated
‘ by his own brother for his advice in some
‘ worldly and temporal affair, he calmly re-
‘ mitted him to consult another of their bro-
‘ thers who had been dead long before; to
‘ whom, when the brother replied, with
‘ much surprise at his advice, that his other
‘ brother was dead, so am I, (answered the
‘ Monk) also dead to this world, and there-
‘ fore have nothing to do in it, or with its
‘ troublesome affairs. This is what our Lord
‘ *Jesus* meant when he answered his blessed
‘ Mother, saying: “ Woman, what is that
‘ to me and to thee?” Clearly teaching
‘ us not to be careful or solicitous for our
‘ friends and relations, or even parents
‘ themselves, in those things which are con-
‘ trary, or inconsistent with the rules our
‘ religion prescribes to us. This he also
‘ confirmed in another place, when, being
‘ told by one of the standers-by, that his
‘ Mother and Brethren waited without de-
‘ siring to speak to him, he said, “ Who
‘ is my Mother, and who are my Bre-
‘ thren?” Matth. xii. Thus far St. *Bernard*.
But

But to return to our subject: The blessed Virgin was not in the least dismayed or dejected at this unexpected answer of her beloved Son; but, full of confidence in his great bounty and goodness, she presently returned to them, and said; "Go to my Son, and whatever he shall say to you, do ye."

John ii. They went as she had ordered them; and having filled the water-pots of stone, which stood there, with water, as our Lord had commanded, he again said to them, "draw now, and carry to the chief steward." Here, first, may we consider the great prudence and wisdom of our Lord *Jesus*, in sending the wine first to the chiefest and most dignified person at the feast. Secondly, we may likewise consider, that our Lord sat not near him, but far below him, when he said; "Take it to the master of the feast?" Whereby it appears, that he held the first place among the invited, and our Lord *Jesus* the lowest. The servants, however, gave the wine to him (the chief steward) and to the rest of the company, openly declaring the manner how it was made, they being eye-witnesses of the miracle; and his Disciples then believed in him. When the feast was ended, *Jesus* took *John* apart by himself, and said unto him; "Leave this woman whom thou hast chosen for thy wife, and follow me, and I will lead thee to a far
' more

‘ more sublime union and heavenly marriage
‘ than this.’ Who, immediately left his wife,
and followed *Christ*, and became his Disciple.
And here may we learn many profitable
things for our instruction and example. The
first is, that our Lord, sanctifying by his pre-
sence this marriage, gives us to understand
that matrimony is both a lawful and honour-
able state, and ordained by God himself.
And in calling St. *John* from the same, he
shews the spiritual marriage and union of
the soul with God in a single life and a state
of virginity, to be much more excellent and
perfect.

After he had wrought this miracle, our
Lord *Jesus* departed from thence, and re-
solved now to attend to those things only
which regarded the salvation of man; and
therefore purposed thenceforward, to preach
his heavenly doctrine openly to all mankind.
He would first however conduct his holy Mo-
ther safe home to her little habitation. Where-
fore, taking her by the hand, and being fol-
lowed by St. *John*, and the rest of his Disci-
ples, they went into *Capharnaum*, which is
near *Nazareth*; and after some few days,
they from thence reached *Nazareth*. Con-
template here, devout reader, this blessed
couple, the Mother and the Son. Consider
them humbly travelling on foot; and though
wearied with the fatigues of their journey,
yet

yet united with the strictest ties of love to each other. O what a heavenly couple is this! Such as the world was never before blessed with. Consider likewise his Disciples, who reverently follow them, and attentively listen to the sacred doctrine which proceeds from the mouth of their divine master; who, was never idle, but was ever instructing them in such things as might redound to their good. Wherefore we may piously imagine, that the abundance of heavenly consolation, which they reaped from such sacred conversation greatly allayed the toils of their fatiguing journey.

C H A P. XX.

*The sermon of our Lord on the mount;
which he began by poverty.*

OUR Lord, calling his Disciples apart from the croud, ascended with them to mount *Tabor*, about two miles distant from *Nazareth*; to infuse into them his divine doctrine. For it was fit to instruct them first, who were to be appointed masters and leaders of the rest. He taught them then many things in that place in a most beautiful and ample sermon; and no wonder

wonder a sermon should be such, which was delivered by the mouth of the Lord. He taught them the beatitudes, the dignity of prayer, fasting, alms-deeds; and many truths relating to every other virtue, as appears in the holy Gospel. Which I advise you, gentle reader, to peruse seriously and frequently, and to endeavour to enrich your memory with, for they are full of spiritual sublimity; but would require too great a prolixity to consider here, neither is it proper to croud meditations like these with too many expositions of scripture. However, I shall not entirely drop them, but here and there intersperse some few, and add to them some moral reflections of my own, or of the holy Fathers, as occasion, and your instruction may require. Let it at present suffice to observe, that our Lord began this his exhortation with poverty; giving us thereby to understand, that poverty is the first foundation of all spiritual structures. Hence, nothing can be more inconsistent than for *Christ*, the pattern of poverty, to be followed by persons loaded with temporal riches; since they, whose affections are linked to such fleeting vanities, are more properly in a state of slavery than freedom. And they only, are qualified for being happy, whose hearts are at liberty. Therefore it was that *Christ* told them,
“Blessed

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, &c.” For no heart is free, but that which is linked to God; and they only are so, whose affections tend only to him. We render ourselves subject to whatever we affectionately love; and therefore ought we to love nothing but him, because subjection to him is the only true liberty. The truly poor, therefore, may justly be called blessed, who, for God’s sake, contemn all things else. For, by this means, he becomes, in a great measure, united to God. Of this great virtue, thus says St. Bernard.

“Poverty is a noble kind of wings that bear us up in a trice to the kingdom of Heaven. The other virtues consequential to this, obtain us only a promise of it; but to poverty, felicity is rather given than promised: Wherefore our Saviour speaks in the present tense, “for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” Matth. xii. And a little farther, he adds: “We see some poor persons sorrowful and pusillanimous; who would be quite otherwise, was their poverty such as we are speaking of; for then they would consider themselves as princes, and possessors of a heavenly kingdom. But, alas, the generality of mankind would be poor, upon condition of wanting nothing, and love no other poverty than such a one as is attended with no inconveniency.” And elsewhere, “And I,” says he, “when once I am exalted above

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above the earth, may boldly affirm, that I will draw all things after me: for if once I put on the likeness of my brother, I may, without rashness, adopt his speech; let not then the rich of this world imagine, that the brethren of *Christ* possess nothing but heavenly things, because they hear *Christ* say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." No: for they are likewise in possession of the earth; having nothing, yet possessing all things; not begging like mumpers, but receiving as masters; so much the more truly masters of all, as they covet nothing. In a word, the whole world, to the faithful lover of poverty, is a fund of riches; because prosperity and adversity are alike subservient and beneficial to him. The covetous worldling yearns after earthly things like a beggar; the faithful lover of poverty despises them like a prince. Ask any one of those who with insatiable eagerness pursue worldly gain, what they think of them who, selling what they have to distribute the price of it to the poor, purchase the kingdom of Heaven with earthly substance; and whether he looks upon them to act prudently or not? He will, doubtless, approve their wisdom. Ask him again, why he neglects to do himself what he deems well done by others? He will answer, I cannot do it. But why? Truly

Truly because tyrannizing avarice will not permit him; because he is not free; because he has neither right to, nor possession of what he seems to enjoy. If they are thine, put them out to interest, purchase with them a solid estate, and with an earthly fund buy an eternal heavenly one. If you are not Lord enough of them to have this in your power, I shall deem you not master, but slave to them; the steward, not the possessor. Thus far *St. Bernard*. Now let us return to our meditation. Consider then our Lord *Jesus* humbly sitting on the ground, with his Disciples round him. How affably does he converse with them, as if one of themselves; teaching, and in a beautiful, benign, and pathetic manner, inculcating to them the practice of the above-mentioned virtues. And ever study, as I have before advised you, to contemplate his divine countenance. Cast an attentive eye likewise on his Disciples, and imagine you see with what reverence, humility, and fixed attention they observe his blessed aspect, hear his wonderful discourse, and imprint it in their minds; reaping sovereign delight from his words and heavenly looks. In this meditation, endeavour to share their delight with them; attentive, as if you beheld him speaking; and ready to approach with them, in case you should be called; dwelling on this pious subject, according to the lights

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and

and graces which it shall please God to bestow on you.

After the sermon is over, behold our Lord *Jesus* descending from the mount with his Disciples, and familiarly conversing with them upon the road; and observe how that little simple congregation follow him, not in any formal order, but as the hen is followed by her chickens; each crouding about him, and struggling to get near him, the better to hear his divine discourse. Think you see the multitudes running to meet him, and bringing their sick to be cured by him; for he cured all.

C H A P. XXI.

The servant of the centurion, and the son of the prince cured by him.

AT *Capharnaum*, a certain centurion (that is, a captain of a company composed of a hundred men) had a servant who lay sick. Full of faith therefore, he sent to our Lord *Jesus* to entreat him to cure him: and our humble Lord answered, "I will come and cure him." Luke vii. When the centurion heard the answer, he immediately sent back to him this message: "Lord, I
" am

"am not worthy thou shouldst enter under
 "my roof: say but by word, and my ser-
 "vant shall be cured." Upon which, *Jesus*,
 applauding his faith, cured the servant at a
 distance. In the same city, lived a prince
 (or petty king) who went in person to *Jesus*,
 beseeching him to come to his house and cure
 his sick son. But *Jesus* refused to go, though
 he acquiesced to cure the youth. Here con-
 sider the merit of faith in the centurion, and
 this fresh instance of humility in our Saviour,
 who offered himself to go to the servant, tho'
 he refused to go to the pompous prince.

Here you see that no exception ought to
 be made of persons. "Our Lord shews more
 "regard to the servant of the officer than to
 "the son of the king." John iv. Thus then
 it little becomes us to shew any regard in our
 charitable offices to external pomp and ap-
 pearance: it is the goodness, the right inten-
 tion, and exigence of the person which are
 to draw our attention. In a word, our ser-
 vices to our neighbour are to be guided, not
 by complaisance, but by christian charity.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXII.

The Paralytic brought in to our Lord by the house-top, and cured by him.

IN the same city of *Capharnaum*, while our Lord *Jesus* was teaching in a certain house where pharisees and doctors of the law, from all parts of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, were assembled to hear him, some people came thither, and struggled to get in, with a man ill of the palsy, whom they had brought on purpose to have him cured by our Saviour, *Matt. ii. Luke v.* But finding it impossible to get in at the door, for the great croud, they got upon the top of the house, and carried him in that way, and placed him before *Christ*. *Jesus* then, seeing their great faith, said to the paralytic: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." *Mark ix.* The pharisees and doctors, looking maliciously on, said to each other, that he had blasphemed, since he attributed to himself (whom they considered as meer man) the power of forgiving sins, which belonged only to God. Our benign and humble Lord, searcher of the hearts and reins of man, answered, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? That you may know (added he) that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say rise and walk." *Mark ix.*

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Here are four things worthy our meditation. First, the perspicuity of *Christ's* understanding, who saw into their hearts. Secondly, that illness is often the consequence of sin, and that absolution from this, often frees us from that; which may likewise be gathered from the sick man cured at the fish-pond, whom our Saviour cautioned not to sin again, lest something worse should befall him. Thirdly, that great must be the merit of faith, since the faith of one person may be beneficial to another; as we have before seen, in the case of the centurion's servant, and shall farther see, in the daughter of the *Cananean*, who was cured by the faith of the mother. And it is daily verified in the baptism of infants, who, if they die before their age of discretion, receive, by the faith of others, the earnest by which they are saved through the merits of *Christ*, contrary to the accursed doctrine of some heretics. Fourthly, we may meditate the goodness of our divine Lord sitting amidst the perverse pharisees, affably confounding their malice, and working a miracle to try to convert them. Here recollect what I have said on the general subject of meditation.

Our Lord's curing Simon's mother-in-law.

In the same city it happened likewise that our Lord called in at the house of Simon Peter, whose mother-in-law was in a high fever. Our humble Lord, informed of it, familiarly stretched forth his sacred hand to her, and cured her; and she immediately arose, and ministered to him and his Disciples. But what did she minister? We do not find that recorded. You may then devoutly imagine, that in the house of such poor people nothing but poor and humble viands, such as were soon prepared, were laid before them. Piously fancy too, that you see our Lord himself humbly helping to set things in decent order, in the house of his Disciple; these, and such other humble exercises, you may entertain your thoughts with; for all such, we may reasonably conceive our Lord to have done, who was come to minister, and not to be ministered unto. Thus then consider him familiarly seated at table, under this humble roof, in the midst of this little company of simple ones, and cheerfully partaking of their coarse food, with so much the more pleasure as his beloved poverty presided there.

C H A P. XXIV.

Our Lord's sleeping in the boat.

OUR Lord Jesus, entering into a boat with his Disciples, composed himself to sleep, laying his head on a pillow: for he might well be fatigued, passing his nights generally in prayer, and his days in the toil of preaching. When he was asleep, a sudden storm arising, the Disciples were affrighted, and apprehended themselves in danger of perishing, but dared not awake him for some time. At length however, overcome with fear, they roused him, crying, "Lord, save us, we perish." Our Lord arose, and, chiding them for their little faith, "commanded the sea and the winds, and the storm gave over." Matth. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii. In these circumstances contemplate our Lord, according to the general rules I have before given you. Add this farther consideration, that though God seems sometimes to sleep to us, and to our concerns, especially in time of tribulation and need, yet we ought to remain firm in faith and confidence, without staggering; for he is ever really awake, and diligently watchful in what regards our good and safety.

CHAPTER XXXV

The widow's son raised by our Lord.

AS our Lord was once going towards the city of *Nain*, he met a multitude of people bearing to the grave the corpse of a young man, the late son of a widow who followed. The compassionate *Jesus*, moved to pity at her grief, approached, stopped the bearers, and made them set down the bier, then addressing himself, said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And the youth, who had been dead, arose, and he restored him to his mother: at which all were astonished, and gave praises to God for so great a wonder. *Luke vii.* Here recur to the general heads of meditation.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Our Lord's raising a girl from the dead, and curing Martha.

AT the instance of a very considerable man, our Lord *Jesus* was going with him to cure his daughter. A great multitude accompanied him, among whom was

a woman extremely ill, who is reported to have been *Martha*, the sister of *Mary Magdalen*. This woman, acquainted with the wonders he had wrought, said to herself, that if she could but touch the hem of his garment, she should be made well. *Matth. ix.* Accordingly approaching, though with fear, she touched it, and was cured. Our Lord then said, "Who has touched me?" When *Peter* answered, "Lord, you see what crowds press upon and molest you, and you ask, who has touched me?" Here consider the patience of *Christ*, who suffers himself to be thus frequently molested and pressed by the rude populace. However, our Lord well knew what he said, and therefore added, "I know that a virtue proceeded from me." *Luke vii.* *Martha* then manifested her cure, and our Lord was pleased with curing her, with whom he was afterwards divinely intimate, and told her, "Thy faith hath made thee well." Here again you have a fresh commendation of faith; here likewise you see, that *Christ* is willing his miracles should be made manifest for the good of the public, and yet is so humble as to conceal the part he has in them, attributing to the merit of her faith the effects of his own divine power.

Here too it is worth your notice to observe what *St. Bernard* remarks, 'Every perfect

“servant of *Christ* (says he) may be called
 “the hem or lowest part of *Christ*’s garment,
 “on account of the mean opinion he has of
 “himself.” Let them therefore, who, ar-
 rived to this pitch of perfection, perceive
 that God hears their prayers, and grants
 them the cure of diseases, or other miracu-
 lous powers, take care not to be elated, nor
 attribute to themselves what is properly his
 work and not theirs. For though *Martha*
 touched the hem with hopes of being cured
 by the touch, as she really was, yet the vir-
 tue of the cure came from the Lord, and
 not from the hem: and therefore he said,
 “I know that a virtue proceeded from me.”
 Mind this well then, and never attribute any
 good to yourself, for it all comes from our
 Lord *Jesus*.

Our Saviour after this went to the house
 of the great man above-mentioned, and
 finding that the girl, whom he came to
 cure, was dead, he raised her again to life.
 Here again recur to the general heads of
 contemplation I have already proposed to
 you, and so often mentioned.

CHAP.

C H A P. XXXVII.

The conversion of the Magdalen, and other things.

OUR gracious Lord, one day, by the invitation of Simon the leper, went to dine with him, which he was accustomed to do, out of his natural courtesy, and the zeal he had for the salvation of souls. Luke vii. Thus the divine Jesus attracted to himself those, for whose sakes he came down from Heaven, by eating, and familiarly conversing among them. The love of poverty too, was another motive that induced him so to do. For he was extremely poor, and had reserved nothing of earthly substance for himself or those that belonged to him. And therefore this pattern of humility, readily and cheerfully accepted of their invitation as occasion required. *Magdalen*, who probably had often heard him preach, and inwardly loved him, though she had yet given no proofs of it, chanced to hear of our Saviour's dining at the house of this leper. Wherefore, touched already with a real sorrow at heart for her sins, convinced that he alone could rid her of them, and resolved no longer to delay her conversion, she went strait to where our Saviour was;

was; and, with her eyes and face towards the ground, she passed by the whole company, regardless of all, till she came to her beloved Lord. Then throwing herself prostrate before him, with a certain secret confidence which her inward love for him gave her, with a torrent of tears she began to bathe his sacred feet, sighing, and tacitly saying in her heart, "Lord, I firmly believe, know, and confess you to be my God, and my Sovereign. I have offended your divine Majesty by many and great transgressions, and have multiplied my sins above the number of the sands of the sea. But, wicked sinner as I am, I fly to your mercy for refuge. I grieve and repent me from my soul, I crave pardon, am prepared to amend, and determined to conform my life for the future to your blessed precepts, without ever departing from them. Oh! reject me not; turn me not away from you; I am sensible I can have recourse to none but you, and you alone I will, and wish to recur to; for you alone I love above all things. Repulse me not then, but punish my iniquities as you shall think proper; but yet, grant me the mercy I sue for." All this while she kept bathing the blessed feet of Jesus with the plenteous flood of her unbidden tears.—Hence you may see plainly that our Lord went always bare-footed.

At

At length, the illustrious penitent, with becoming resolution, stopped her tears awhile; and, judging them unworthy to fall on our Lord's sacred feet, she wiped them off with her stately locks; using her hair on this occasion, because she had nothing more precious with her for that purpose, and because she wished to make those very instruments of her former vanity, instrumental to her present conversion; besides that she wished not to remove her face off the feet of her divine master. When she had wiped them dry, she devoutly pressed them with her lips, with frequent eagerness that spoke her growing love, and afterwards anointed them with precious ointments, as they were fatigued with frequent and laborious travelling. Behold her then attentively, consider maturely her devotion, and dwell awhile on her love to *Christ*, and his to her; and endeavour to be perfectly present at this entertainment, which was very solemn in every circumstance. Contemplate likewise the divine *Jesus* how benignly he receives, and how patiently he bears with all she does. He suspends his dinner till she has done; and all the guests are in suspense at the novelty. *Simon* could not help judging our Saviour in his mind; thinking he would not have suffered such a woman to approach him if he had been a Prophet, and had known who

who she was. But our Lord soon shewed his prophetic power, by answering Simon's thoughts with the parable of the debtor. And, openly to shew that love is the great end of all, concluded, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has greatly loved." Luke vii. And then turning to her, "Go" (says he) "in peace." O delightful, and pleasing sentence! How gladly did *Magdalen* hear it, and how joyfully retire! And now truly converted, she led ever after an innocent holy life; and firmly adhered to the service and honour of him and his blessed Mother. Contemplate therefore, gentle reader, these circumstances with all the devotion you can summon, and labour to imitate this charity, which is so highly approved by our Lord *Jesus*, as well by facts as words.

Here then you have an express proof that charity works a perfect peace and reconciliation between God and sinners. Hence it is that St. *Peter* tells us that, "Charity covers a multitude of sins," 1 Pet. iv. As charity then is the soul of every virtue, and none are pleasing to God that are not inflamed with charity, I shall quote some authorities to induce you to aim at the acquisition of this great virtue; in order to render yourself acceptable to the blessed *Jesus*.

St. *Bernard* then says of it: "This excellent gift, charity, must needs be of incomparable

' comparable worth, since the divine Spouse
 ' is so earnest in enforcing it to his new
 ' bride. In one place, saying, In this all
 ' shall know, you are my Disciples, if you
 ' have love for one another. John xiii. In
 ' another, I give you a new precept, that
 ' you love one another. Ibid. And
 ' again, This is my commandment, that
 ' you love one another. Ibid xv. Pray-
 ' ing elsewhere, that they become one, as
 ' he and the Father are one. A little lower
 the Saint adds: What can we imagine
 ' comparable to this, which is preferred even
 ' to martyrdom, and to a faith sufficient to
 ' move mountains? Thus then when I say
 ' to you, Peace be with you. John xx. I
 ' mean, may your peace proceed to you from
 ' within yourselves, and then all that may
 ' seem to threaten you with disturbance
 ' from without, will neither have power to
 ' fright nor offend you.

The same Saint tells us: The value of
 ' every soul is rated by the measure of its
 ' charity. As for example, the soul that has
 ' much charity, is great and vast; that
 ' which has but little, is small and diminu-
 ' tive, nay nothing; for, as the Apostle in
 ' his first to the Corinthians, chap. v. tells
 ' us, "If I have not charity, I am nothing."
 ' However, if it begins to possess even so
 ' slender a portion, as to love where it is be-

‘loved, to salute brethren and those who
‘salute, we cannot say that soul is absolutely
‘nothing. I will allow a soul to be not quite
‘nothing, if, at least, it returns love for love,
‘and cultivates social charity. And yet, ac-
‘cording to our Lord’s words, “how much
“more than nothing does it do?” “I can-
‘not then, by any means, think a soul
‘great, but rather very little and very con-
‘tracted when I discover so slender a portion
‘of charity in it: but if it grows up and
‘improves so as, passing the narrow limits
‘of so contracted a charity, to reach with
‘liberty of spirit the utmost bounds of gra-
‘tuitous bounty, by extending itself with
‘profuseness of good-will to every neigh-
‘bour, and by loving all as itself; can we
‘any longer say to it, What dost thou do
‘more? For a soul that dilates itself thus
‘much, must have a heart capacious enough
‘to contain all mankind, even such as it is
‘not tied to by blood, hopes of interest, or
‘any other obligation, save that of which
‘the Apostle speaks; “Owe nobody any
“thing, but that ye love one another.”
‘However, if you will make farther ad-
‘vances towards the pious invasion of the
‘kingdom of charity, and are desirous of
‘carrying your conquests to its farthest con-
‘fines, open the bowels of your compassion
‘to your very enemies, do good to those
‘who

“ who hate you, pray for those who perse-
 “ cute and revile you, and study to be peace-
 “ ful to those who hate peace. Then, then
 “ indeed the altitude and latitude of the Hea-
 “ vens and of your soul are alike, and their
 “ beauty the same. Then will be fulfilled
 “ in you what is sung of God, “ extending
 “ the Heavens as a skin.” Psalm ciii. And
 “ in this Heaven of your soul, grown to so
 “ miraculous a height, width, and beauty,
 “ the Most High will delight to inhabit, to
 “ expatiate, and manifest his immensity and
 “ glory in.” Thus far St. Bernard. ”

You see then, pious reader, how useful
 and necessary a virtue is charity, without
 which, it is impossible to please God, and
 with which, every one is sure to be agree-
 able in his sight. Study therefore, with all
 your heart, with all your mind, and with
 all your forces to possess it. For this pos-
 session will enable you to bear with con-
 stancy, courage, and cheerfulness, the
 greatest hardships and severities for the sake
 of God and you neighbour.

C. H. A. P. XXVIII.

John sent his Disciples to Jesus.

THAT glorious combatant and precursor
 of Christ, St. John the Baptist, was
 fettered in prison, by order of Herod, for

the defence of truth, in reproving him for detaining the wife of his loving brother. *Matt. xi.* Here it was that, desirous of committing his Disciples to the care of our Lord *Jesus*, he thought of sending them on a message to him; that, hearing his divine Oracle's words, and seeing the wonders he wrought, they might be inflamed with the love of him, and take to following him. Accordingly he dispatched them to *Jesus*, whom they asked in the name of *John*, "Is it you who are to come, or are we to expect another?" Our Saviour was then amidst a great multitude. Behold him then attentively, and see with what a pleasing aspect he receives the messengers of *John*, wisely answering them, first in deeds, and then in words. In their presence then he cured the deaf, the dumb, and the blind, wrought many other miracles, preached to the people, and then among other things told these envoys, "Go, relate to *John* what you have heard and seen." They gladly performed their embassy, and related all to *John*, who as gladly received the joyful tidings. And after the death of *John* these Disciples firmly adhered to *Christ*. After their departure, our Saviour bestowed great encomiums on *John* to the multitude, as that he was a Prophet, nay more than a Prophet, and that a greater than him had not

not appeared among the children of women, and the like, as you may find in the Gospel. Contemplate then our divine Lord in every situation whether preaching or teaching, or doing ought else, as I have already counselled you so often.

C H A P. XXIX.

The death of St. John the Baptist.

HERE we may pause awhile in meditation on the glorious end of St. John the Baptist. When therefore, impious Herod and his infamous adulteress had perhaps already plotted the death of the Baptist, that they might escape the reproaches due to their criminal familiarity; it happened that at a public entertainment, *Herodias*, the wretched fruit of their incestuous bed; danced so much to the satisfaction of *Herod*, that he gave her for a promised recompence the head of *John*. And in consequence of this grant, he was beheaded in the prison. Behold here, how great a man is put to death, and how basely and ignominiously is he murdered by the iniquity of a reigning tyrant. Oh great God, how did you suffer this! What can be the cause of the death of
so

so great a man, one of such perfection and sanctity as to be taken for *Christ*? But if you would digest this well, consider first the baseness and barbarity of his murderers, and then meditate on the singular greatness and eminence of *John*, and you will find fresh matter of surprise. You have already heard above, the many and great encomiums bestowed upon him, by our divine Saviour; now hear what applauses *St. Bernard* gives him in his panegyric on him. That Mother and Mistress of all Churches, the Roman Church (says he) of which it is said: I have prayed for thee, *Peter*, that thy faith fail not, next after the name of our Saviour, received her consecration and badge in honour of *St. John* the Baptist. It was indeed, fit that the singular friend of his beloved spouse should pass thither when she was to be raised to her sovereign dignity. *Peter* was crucified, *Paul* was beheaded, but the dignity of preference, was still given to the precursor. The purple of *Rome* is the blood of Martyrs, the sovereign honour belongs to that holy patriarchat. Still *John* is every where greater, singularly wonderful in all things and above all. Who was ever so gloriously proclaimed? Who was so amply replenished with the Holy Ghost in the womb of his Mother? Whose nativity does
the

• the church solemnise besides his? Who
 • was ever so fond of the solitude of a De-
 • sert? Who was ever known to converse so
 • sublimely? Who was the first preacher of
 • penance, and the kingdom of heaven?
 • *John.* Who baptised the King of Glory?
 • *John.* Who plainly revealed the sacred
 • mystery of the trinity? *John.* To whom
 • did *Christ* ever give testimony but to *John*?
 • And finally, to whom, after *Christ* and his
 • Mother, does the Church pay so much ho-
 • nour as to *John*? *John* is a Patriarch,
 • nay, the last, and head of all Patriarchs:
 • *John* is a Prophet, nay, more than a Pro-
 • phet: For him, whose coming he fore-
 • tells, he points out with his finger: *John*
 • is an Angel, and the chosen among Angels;
 • our Saviour testifying it of him, saying:
 • "Behold I send my Angel, &c." *John* is
 • *John* is an Apostle, and the first of Apost-
 • les, and their Prince; and the first of
 • God's Messenger's; *John* is an Evangelist
 • and preacher of the Gospel; but the first
 • in that office: *John* is a Virgin, nay, the
 • illustrious pattern of all Virgins. The
 • title-spring of purity, and mirror of cha-
 • rity: *John* is a Martyr, and the encou-
 • ragement of other Martyrs, and the soul
 • of Martyrdom from the birth to the death
 • of *Christ*: he, the voice crying in the De-
 • sert, he the forerunner of the judge, and
 • the

the Herald of the DIVINE WORD. He is Elias, and till his coming, the law and the Prophets were so many lamps that beamed forth brightly and warmly their beneficent influence. I pass over in silence the proficiency he made in angelic perfections, by which, he not only imitated every degree of that heavenly hierarchy, but even emulated the highest in figurative wisdom and virtue." Thus far St. Bernard. Now hear that holy Archbishop of Ravenna, St. Peter Chrysogonus, in a panegyric on the day of his decollation.

The life of the Baptist (says he) is the school of virtue, the mastership of life, the plan of sanctity, and the model of justice, &c. If therefore, you compare the excellence of merit, and eminence of dignity in John, with the littleness and groveling baleness of those who beheaded him, you cannot help being surprised. What shall a common hangman (the basest of human species) be empowered to take away the life of so great, so good a personage, as if he was the meanest and most execrable highwayman or murderer! Behold him then, with reverence and concern; how readily he stoops his neck to the command of this vile and reprobate butcher; how humbly he bends his knees, and, giving thanks to God, lays his neck on the block,

block, and patiently received the repeated strokes of the barbarous executioner. Thus departs the Baptist, that intimate friend, near relation, and familiar of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Oh! what a confusion is this for us, who, at the least visit of a trivial adversity, lose all sight of patience. *John*, innocent *John*, meets death, and such a death, with cheerfulness; and we, stained and spotted with sin, and worthy the divine indignation, are unable to sustain the least contradictions, or indignities, though but in bare words.

Our Saviour was absent from the city, when *John* was beheaded, though still in *Judea*. But when his death was published, our divine Lord wept for him, as did his Disciples, and the blessed Virgin, who had nursed him in his most tender infancy, and who still loved him with extreme affection. Our blessed Redeemer, however, consoled her, with telling her, that it was expedient he should die for the defence of the justice of his heavenly Father, that he would soon receive the reward of his sufferings in heaven; and that it was not the will of the Almighty to award his Saints from death, since they are not designed for this world: their kingdom and country not being earthly, but celestial. *John* is freed from the chains of the body, and the powers of death

death, have no more force to retain him on earth, or to detain him from the kingdom of Heaven, whither he will soon be transferred to reign with my Father. Be then of good heart, oh dearly beloved Mother, all is well with your favourite Baptist. Soon after this *Christ* retired from these parts to *Galilee*. Dwell, gentle reader, on the preceding subjects, endeavour to render yourself present to them, contemplate them devoutly, and when you have compleated your meditation on these heads, as God shall be pleased to inspire you, proceed to others, and follow your blessed Saviour, step by step, whitherever he goes.

C H A P. XXX.

The conference our Lord Jesus had with the Samaritan woman, as he sat, being faint and wearied, by the side of the well to rest himself.

IT happened upon a certain time that as our Lord *Jesus* was going from the country of *Judea* into *Galilee*, he passed through the country of *Samaria*, and being wearied with the fatigue of his journey, which was about the space of fifteen miles, he sat down

to

to rest himself by the side of a well in the way, which is called the well of *Jacob*. Consider here, pious Christian, thy God, and contemplate awhile how he is pleased to condescend to be tired and faint for thy sake. He frequently travelled, was often wearied, and his whole life was laborious, painful, and full of troubles.

While our Lord sat thus by the well's side, his Disciples went into the next town to provide meat to refresh themselves: In the mean time, there came a woman of that country, whose name was *Lucia*, to draw water from the well: with whom our Lord began to discourse, and to manifest himself unto her, talking of many, great, and sublime mysteries. What the particulars of this discourse was, how his Disciples returned again unto him, and how, by the woman's relation of him, the people of the city came out to him, and detained him with them for many days together, and how, at last, he departed from them, I shall wholly omit, and pass by at present, it being clearly set forth at large in the Gospel of St. *John*; to which I refer you, there fixedly to contemplate every action of our Lord *Jesus*. For concerning the doctrine, which, for our instruction, may be gathered from this part of sacred history, there are many things concerning our Lord

Jesus which are worthy our greatest notice and attention. And first, his great meekness, that our most humble Lord would vouchsafe to remain alone, while his Disciples were gone into the city to buy provision. Secondly, he disdained not to converse with that low and simple woman, and to treat with her of such sublime and sacred mysteries, as though he had been discoursing of them, in the presence of the most learned and wise men. This ought to reprove and confound the pride of the more learned, who imagine their labour and pains were lost, in bestowing their words, swelled with vanity, upon a few, or only on one person, esteeming so slender an audience unworthy to receive the exposition of their sublime doctrine. Thirdly, we may consider his great poverty, mortification of the flesh, and humility: his Disciples brought him meat from the city, and desired him to eat: but where did he eat? Without the city, in the open air, and at the well's side, drinking of the water to quench his thirst. And in this poor and humble manner, being weary, faint, and hungry, he refreshed himself. Neither are we to imagine, that it was only once, or by chance, that this happened to him, but that it was his usual custom so to do. For we may well suppose, that our most humble Lord travelled thro' all

all the countries in the same manner, and that, though ever so faint and wearied, he oftentimes took his small refection, without the towns and habitations of the people, near some well or river, having neither delicate meats, curious plates, or delicious wines; but the pure element, from the river or fountain, was his chief and only liquor. He, who makes the vineyard abundantly fruitful, the springs to flow with plenty, and gives life to all that move in the waters, was humbly contented, like another poor man, with bread and water only, upon the bare ground. We may likewise, contemplate how intent our Lord *Jesus* was in the study of heavenly things, and of such as regarded more the soul than the body; for being asked by his Disciples to eat of those meats which they had brought him, he answered them, saying: "I have meat to eat, that you know not----my meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

John iv. Wherefore he waited till the people of the city came, that he might preach to them; desiring first to perform that which appertained to the nourishment of their souls, before that which belonged to the refreshment of his own body, notwithstanding the great necessity he had for it. Contemplate well these things, and endeavour with all your study to imitate his virtues.

C H A P. XXXI.

The Disciples of our Lord Jesus pluck ears of corn, and eat them through hunger, on the Sabbath.

AS the Disciples of our Lord Jesus passed through the fields with him on the Sabbath-day, where corn was growing, they plucked the ears, and rubbed them between their hands, and eat them through hunger. The Pharisees (who watched every word and action of our Lord, that they might find an occasion of accusing him of some breach of their law) reproved him and his Disciples for it, saying; "Thy Disciples do that which is not lawful for them to do on the Sabbath-days." Matth. xii. But our Lord, to excuse them, First, brought the example of David and his companions, who, when they were hungry, eat the bread of the propolition. "Have you not read (said he) what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him: how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the loaves of propolition, which were not lawful for him to eat, nor for them that were with him; but for priests only?" Secondly, That the priests of the law, on the Sabbath-day, circumcised and offered sacrifice; which are

are both corporal works. "Have ye not
 "read in the law. (said he again) that on
 "the Sabbath-days the priests in the Temple
 "do break the Sabbath, and are without
 "blame." Ibid. And what might have
 served for the greatest excuse; and indeed
 the only one, was; That the Lord of the
 Creation was himself present there, who was
 the author and master of the law, and there-
 fore could give them leave to break it.

Let us now devoutly consider, and take
 compassion on the great necessity of the Dis-
 ciples, though in company of their Lord,
 who is the sovereign God and Master of all
 things. If we duly reflect on it, we cannot
 chuse but be inspired with the love of poverty
 and corporal distress for his sake. For is it
 not strange to think that they, who, by a
 singular prerogative were chosen to the sub-
 lime degree of the apostleship, and made
 the princes of the world, should be obliged
 by hunger to eat the ears of corn as if they
 were not men, but irrational and senseless
 animals; and this too, in the presence of
 him, who is the Creator of all things, and
 who bountifully feeds and provides for every
 creature; and yet he sees them suffer such
 want without bestowing his relief, as if he
 were not able to help them? But our most
 gracious and merciful Lord, who wrought
 all things for our greater example, and for
 the

the good of our salvation, suffered; than to be thus needy and poor, for the accomplishment of his greatest designs; but he himself also had assumed the nature of man, with all the infirmities incident to him, but yet without sin. Wherefore, though he had compassion on them in this their hunger and distress, inasmuch as he was moved to it by the tender love he bore them; nevertheless he was pleased with it, as he saw the good will with which they suffered, that is, out of pure love and affection to him.

And here all such as have forsaken the world for the love of our blessed Lord, have a perfect model from which they may copy all those virtues which are necessary for them to follow; that is, patience in distress, true poverty of spirit, and the virtue of abstinence, contrary to the vice of gluttony. And first, as to patience in all our necessities and wants: seeing that the Disciples of our Lord Jesus, who had quitted all they had possessed to follow him, suffered with cheerfulness and patience such great distress in his presence, whom they saw feed and relieve miraculously many thousands of other men; how much more ought we to be patient in the like necessities, when it shall please his divine goodness to afflict us with them? Since we are neither so deserving his favours as they were, nor are we so perfectly established in

his love; but rather, on the contrary, have deserved, for our impatience and ingratitude to so bountiful a God, much greater punishments, and many more wants than his goodness permits us to suffer; who, perhaps, has never yet suffered us to know any want at all.

Secondly, as to what relates to a perfect poverty: You are to understand that the poverty of our Lord *Jesus*, without any comparison, far excelled in perfection the voluntary poverty of any other person. For such who, for the love of *Christ*, have forsaken all the riches and preferments of this transitory life, their poverty is generally in great repute with worldlings, and is commended and esteemed by them as a sublime and noble virtue. But the poverty of our blessed Lord was ever held in contempt by all; inasmuch as it was unknown to the world, that he voluntarily submitted to it; wherefore they esteemed it to be of meer necessity, and what he could not avoid; as seems to appear both in him and his Disciples, who were constrained through hunger to pluck and eat the ears of corn; and as that poverty, which we suffer not by choice, but through necessity, is too often reckoned a contemptible thing, so likewise was that of our blessed Lord: for such as knew him, saw that he had neither house or habitation wherein to

repose or put his head, which drew upon him the contempt and disesteem of all that beheld him. This we may gather from the too general practice of mankind, who conceive the utmost contempt, in regard to the poor and distressed; but if, with patience and resignation, they submit to the divine will, they are in reality most worthy and pleasing in the sight of him who left them this glorious example: Hence, it is a most dangerous and execrable sin to despise any man in his poverty or misery. The truly poor, however, are not such only who have forsaken all temporal riches, and make an outward shew and profession of voluntary poverty, but they, who to this add the poverty of spirit, that is, desire no plenty, nor seek any more comfort in the perishable goods of this life, than just as much as may suffice to support the infirmities of nature. For, if he that is poor remains so only for want of an opportunity of enjoying the goods and plenty of fortune, such a one has no share in the holy poverty of our Lord *Jesus*, but rather lives in poverty, misery, and distress in this life, without any merit of an eternal reward in the next. This is the true description of a perfect poverty, concerning which virtue *St. Bernard* speaks at large in his sermon upon the nativity of our Lord *Jesus*. condemned by the Fathers, and which we can and ought not to imitate. Thirdly,

Thirdly, as to the virtue of abstinence, we may gather most powerful examples both from the Disciples of our Lord, and from our Lord *Jesus* himself. Gluttony is a vice against which we must struggle during our whole life. This we are taught by the holy Fathers, who, by a long experience, were true judges of its dangerous and repeated assaults. And this more especially *St. Bernard*, who in many places tells us, how much we ought to shun that vice, and to nourish the body, so far only as is necessary for its support. For whatever we allow it more than this (by feeding our lust, and exceeding our present necessities) we expose ourselves to the danger of death both of soul and body; being so often overcome, that, like irrational and senseless brutes, we prefer the satisfaction of our greedy appetites to the preservation of health, by taking such meats and drinks, in so great an excess, as we know cannot but occasion many disorders within us: so that not only the body remains indisposed to serve God, but also the soul it therewith so much defiled, that we cannot recur to God with that purity and cleanness of heart as is becoming us.

Seeing then, that the vice of gluttony is of so dangerous a consequence, and so much condemned by the Fathers, we must endeavour to shun it all we can, and obtain the

virtue of abstinence, which we may learn from the example of our blessed Lord, of his Disciples, and other Saints; who have taught us to subdue our flesh, and kept it in subjection by temperate food, and such a degree of abstinence as may be guided by the virtue of discretion, which, as St. *Bernard* saith, 'Is not only a virtue itself, but also the director of all other virtues; inasmuch as where this is wanting, that which may seem to be virtue, is only vice.' And St. *Gregory* saith that 'Discretion is the mother and preserver of all other virtues.' Which discretion, in relation to abstinence, and the nourishing of our bodies, consists in this (as St. *Augustine* teacheth in his book of confessions) that a man ought to use the same moderation in eating and drinking for the nourishment of his body, as he would use in taking of a medicine for the cure of an infirmity. For as in taking physic we should take such a portion or quantity as is sufficient for healing our sores, or the curing our disease; so likewise, as hunger and thirst became the infirmities of mankind by the transgression of *Adam*, meat and drink, which are medicines appointed for the curing of these infirmities, ought to be taken only in such a proportion as is conducive to that end.

Thus much may suffice of the virtue of abstinence, and the vice contrary to it, which

is gluttony, which I have here taken occasion to treat of, from the hunger our Lord Jesus and his Disciples sustained, and the poorness of their small refection, who, for our example, both here and in the Desert, began vigorously to oppose, and fight against the sin of gluttony.

C H A P. XXXII.

The Jews, having driven our Lord Jesus out of the city to the top of a steep mountain, endeavoured to throw him down from thence.

WHEN our Lord Jesus was again returned to the city of Nazareth, the Jews desired to see him work some miracles; but our Lord, shewing them by many reasons, how unworthy they were of such signs: as Being vehemently enraged against him, they drove him out of the city; and our most humble Lord, closely pursued, meekly fled before them. Their fury was so much increased and kindled against him, that they drove him to the top of a high mountain, that they might thence have an opportunity of throwing him down headlong. Our Lord Jesus however, by the power of his sacred divinity, passed through

through the midst of them, and went his way; for the time was not yet come, in which he had chosen to die. Contemplate him here, devout reader, flying from his enemies, and hiding himself under a rock, to save himself from their fury; compassionate him in his sufferings, and endeavour to follow his steps, in the practice of humility and patience.

C H A P. XXXIII.

The man that had a withered hand, cured by our Lord Jesus!

AS our Lord Jesus was teaching in the Synagogue on one of the Sabbath-days, there was a certain man whose right hand was withered, whom our blessed Lord made to stand in the midst of the Doctors, and said to them, 'Is it lawful or not to do good on the Sabbath-day?' But they made him no answer. He therefore said to the man, 'Stretch forth thy hand,' and it was immediately restored. Our divine Saviour was oftentimes pleased to work miracles on the Sabbath-days to confound the perfidiousness of the Jews, who interpreted the law according to the flesh; which he would have to be observed according to the spirit. The

law did not forbid the performance of good works; and acts of charity were not forbid by the law to be done on the Sabbath-day; but the committing of sins, and servile works. They however greatly scandalized and conspired against him, and said, 'This man is not of God who keeps not the Sabbath.' Our Lord *Jesus*, notwithstanding, did not desist from working miracles on the Sabbath; but rather wrought them more frequently, on purpose to undeceive them, and to convince them of their error. Consider him then, pious Christian, in the exercise of the before-mentioned charitable and good actions; and, according to his example, never omit the doing any good work on account of others being unjustly scandalized: for the fear of such scandal ought never to make us desist from those works which are necessary for the salvation of a soul, or are helps to its spiritual advancement in perfection. Though it is true, that sometimes, to avoid the scandal of our neighbour, according to the prescription of perfect charity, we should abstain from some temporal satisfaction of the body rather than offend him. Wherefore the Apostle, to the Romans says, "It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor that wherein thy brother is offended, or scandalized, or weakened." Rom. xiv.

C H A P. XXXIV.

The multiplication of the loaves, and how our Lord Jesus provides for those who truly love him.

THE Holy Scripture tells us, that at two different times our Lord Jesus wrought the miracle of the multiplication of a few loaves with which he not only fed, but fully satisfied many thousands of people. Do you however, Christian reader, reduce them both to one meditation: and attentively consider the words and actions of *Christ* our Saviour, as they are related in the holy Gospel. "I have compassion (saith he) on this multitude, because now three days they have continued with me. Neither have they what to eat, and if I dismiss them fasting to their home, they will faint in the way: for some of them came afar off," Mark viii. After which, he multiplied the loaves, and they all eat, and were satisfied. If we duly consider these words, together with the miracle that he wrought, we shall find (for our spiritual instruction) many good motives to love and praise his holy name: and more especially for that our Lord Jesus here shewed himself to be most singularly good and merciful, most kind and courteous, most discreet and circumspect.

And

And first, That he was most merciful, appears in the words he spake, saying; "I have compassion on the multitude." Whereby it is plain, that it was his pure mercy alone that moved him to feed and satisfy them in their great hunger and necessity: for, as the royal prophet witnesseth; "All the earth is full of his mercy." Psal. xxxii.

Secondly, He plainly shewed his wonderful kindness and courtesy in the words which immediately follow: "For lo (saith he) now these three days they have continued with me, and have nothing to eat." Holding himself, as it were, obliged to them for remaining with him those three days, when indeed, on the contrary, it was for their own good and advantage, and not for his; save only, that, out of his endless bounty, his desire was, as he himself affirms in another place, to dwell with the sons of men, and be conversant with them for their salvation: for they that follow him by a good life, and are desirous to hearken to his doctrine, and keep his commandments, he most singularly loves, and never withdraws his bountiful hand from them, but ever succours and relieves them in their necessities.

Thirdly, Our blessed Lord shewed his great discretion and circumspection, for seeing that many of the people were come to him from distant parts, and considering

their necessities, and that it was dangerous to dismiss them again fasting, he said; "If I dismiss them fasting to their home they will faint in the way." Consider how full of sweetness and heavenly comfort were these words. The same daily happens to us. For we have not of ourselves, wherewith to sustain either body or soul, unless he please to give it us; and we should faint in our way, should he leave us to ourselves, for without him we cannot attain to any spiritual blessing, so that we have no reason to glory in ourselves when we experience any comfort in our spiritual exercises: since it is not our own, but all comes from him. And therefore, if we duly reflect, we shall find that the true servants of God, the more perfect they were in a holy life, the nearer to God, and the more excellently rich in the gifts of his divine grace; so much the more humble were they in their own eyes, attributing nothing to themselves but misery, wretchedness, and sin. For the nearer any one approaches to God, the more he is illuminated: and therefore more plainly discovers the great goodness and mercy of God, so that pride and vain-glory, which proceed from ignorance and spiritual blindness, can have no place or residence in their soul: for he can have no reason to be proud who truly knows God, and thoroughly examines into his

his own state. But to return : It is certain, that we come from afar off when we come to God, this I speak in regard to myself, and to such as are like to me, who have gone so far astray from God by the sins we have committed. Wherefore whoever returns again to him may be truly said to come a long way. But after that *Christ* had spoke the above-mentioned words, he thence proceeded to deeds.

Behold him then, pious reader, how he takes the loaves in his hands, and, having given thanks to God, gives them to his Disciples to set before the multitude, and multiplied them in such a manner in their hands, that every one eat as much as they cared for, and there still remained many baskets full of scraps. Consider likewise, how he looks on them while they eat, and is pleased in beholding the satisfaction they receive from this refection. And they, at the same time, admiring the wonderfulness of this miracle, fed both their mind and body, rendering praise and thanksgiving to their benefactor, and with joy repeated to each other the wonderful works of his mercy. Whether the blessed Virgin was present or not, the holy Scripture makes no mention : Do you however, Christian reader, meditate on this subject in the manner your devotion shall direct you, and God shall please to inspire you.

C H A P. XXXV.

Our Lord's flight when they would have made him King: And against worldly honours in general.

WHEN our Lord had fed the multitude, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, they sought to make him King. For they considered that he was capable of supplying their wants, and therefore they wisely concluded that they could not be in want of any thing under such a King. But our Lord *Jesus*, knowing their design, fled from them to the mountains, imperceptibly to them, so that they could not find him. *Christ* then would not accept temporal honours. And observe how truly and unfeignedly he labours to shun them: he sends his Disciples by sea, and goes himself up to the mountains, that, if they should persist in pursuing him, as they would probably do it by following his Disciples, they might search for him in vain among them. The Disciples indeed, would not have left our Lord, but that he compelled them so to do. It was undoubtedly a pious disposition in them to desire to remain with *Christ*; but more pious yet to leave him for a time, out of obedience to his will. Observe then, and meditate

meditate with what inward regret they depart from him, and not till he urges them to it, by signifying it to be his divine pleasure; after which they comply, and to shew their humility and entire submission to his commands, go on board the vessel without him, however perilous and grievous it be to them. Thus does *Christ* act daily with us in a spiritual manner; by our own goodwill we would never have *Christ* absent from us, but his pleasure is otherwise: he comes into our souls, and is absent, at times, when and as he pleases, but ever for our good. Hear therefore what *St. Bernard* lays upon this subject. After the divine Spouse has been sought for with continued vigils and prayers, and copious floods of tears, when he seems to be within reach of his pursuing Spouse, he again escapes; and again coming up to his weeping pursuer, suffers himself to be taken, but not retained, flying as were from her arms in the very minute when she embraces him; yet if the faithful soul devoutly persists in her pursuit of him with prayers and tears, he will again, at length, return to her, and “not disappoint her of the wish of her lips.” *Psal. xx.* But again will he disappear, and remain unseen, till again he be sought after with the whole affection. Thus while the soul is confined to this mortal body,

it

it has frequently the joy of its Spouse's
 presence; but that joy is not compleat,
 since, though his visitations rejoice her
 frequently, the frequent vicissitudes of ab-
 sence gives her equal pain. And this the
 beloved must endure, till, having thrown
 off her corporal burden, she shall be able
 to fly, raised on the pinions of her wishes,
 wafted over the plains of contemplation,
 and rapidly following her heavenly Spouse
 whithersoever he goes. Neither shall every
 soul attain to this, but such only as by ex-
 traordinary devotion, vehement desire,
 and tender affection, proves herself a true
 Spouse of *Christ*, and worthy that, taking
 upon him the form of a Spouse, he should
 visit her in the nuptial ornaments of his
 grace.' And elsewhere the same Saint
 says, 'Perhaps he therefore withdrew him-
 self, that he might be recalled the more
 earnestly, and the more ardently retained.
 For thus he once feigned to be going far-
 ther, not that he intended to do so much,
 as to be invited to stay, with that tender
 solicitation, "Stay with us, for it is grow-
 ing late in the evening." Luke xxiv.
 And immediately he adds, "This kind of
 pious feint, or rather salutary dispensation
 of providence, which the incorporeal word
 corporally expressed to the body, the spi-
 rit frequently, in a special manner pecu-
 liar

' liar to itself, makes use of to exercise a
 ' truly devout soul. Passing by, he means
 ' to be stopt; going away, he is willing to
 ' be recalled: his departure is a dispensation
 ' of providence; his return is ever the pur-
 ' pose of his will; and both are the effects
 ' of infinite wisdom, the great ends of which
 ' he alone can fathom. Experience shews
 ' that the soul is frequently exercised with
 ' these vicissitudes of the absence and pre-
 ' sence of the divine word, and he himself
 ' spoke as much: "I go and I return to
 ' you." John xiv. 'and likewise,' "A little
 ' while and you shall not see me, and again
 ' "a little while, and you shall see me." Ibid.
 ' xvi. ' Oh the little while, and no little
 ' while! Oh the short space, and tediously
 ' long duration! Beloved Lord, do you
 ' call it a little while when we are not to
 ' see you? With humblest submission to
 ' your sacred words, O Lord, it is a long,
 ' a tediously long, and heavy age to lose
 ' sight of you but for an instant. Yet both
 ' are true in different senses. An age of
 ' your absence is but a little while, if our
 ' merit only be considered; but if compared
 ' to our wishes, every moment is a tedious
 ' age. This the Prophet hints at, saying,
 ' "If he should delay, wait for him: because
 ' "he will come, and not tarry." Hab. xi.
 ' How will he not tarry, if he should delay
 ' coming;

coming; unless it be that his coming will be expeditious with respect to our desires, though slow with regard to our desires. Now the amorous soul is walled by desire, and drawn on by affection, overlooks its merits, flints its eyes to dazzling majesty, opens them to spiritual joy, fixes its hope in salvation, and in that confidently proceeds. Made intrepid at length by hope, she boldly recalls the divine word, and confidently invites the object of her delight, calling him, with usual liberty, not her Lord, but her beloved Spouse. "Return, my beloved, return." *Cantic. i.* And in another place, "God never ceases" (says the same Saint) to exercise with such vicissitudes those who lead a spiritual life, or rather those whom he intends to lift to spirituality; visiting them betimes, and early proving them. Thus far *St. Bernard.* You have seen then, gentle reader, how our Lord Jesus alternately visits the soul, and departs from it in a spiritual sense; and how the soul ought to behave under either circumstance. She must earnestly and fervently solicit his return, yet patiently bear his absence, after the example of the Disciples, who, out of obedience to him, enter the vessel without him, and bear up against the storms that threaten them, with hopes

of his succour to deliver them. But now let us return to our Lord Jesus,

When the Disciples had put off to sea, he went alone up to the mountains, and thus escaped the hands of them who sought after him. You see with what care and study our Lord fled from the honour of a worldly crown. And what did he this for but to set an example for you to follow? His flight then was not so much for his own sake as for ours. For he well knew what rashness the ambition of worldly honours must hurry us into. For such honours are the greatest snare, I know, that can be laid to entangle us, and the strongest battery that can be planted for the subversion of our souls, whether it consists in the precedence of power, ecclesiastic or secular, of authority, or learning. For it is almost impossible for men to delight in honours, without standing in imminent danger, and tottering as it were on the brink of a steep precipice; nay, rather should I say, without being already rolling down it; and that for many reasons. First, Because the mind that is once delighted with honours is wholly engrossed by them, and thinks on nothing but conserving and improving them; and St. Gregory, in his 30th Homily, observes, that every one is so much the more alienated from the love of the Supreme Being as he is delighted with infe-

‘rior objects.’ Secondly, Because he is quite taken up with procuring a multitude of friends, acquaintances, and correspondents, by whose means and assistance he may add to his honours, and consequently must comply with many things incompatible with conscience and God’s pleasure, out of mere complaisance to them from whose familiarity he expects such advantages. Thirdly, He envies those who are possessed of the honours he covets, and generally detracts from their merit, and thus falls into envy and scandal. Fourthly, He thinks himself, and would have others esteem him worthy honours, and thus becomes vain and arrogant: when, according to the Apostle, “He who thinks himself something, when he is really nothing, deceives himself.” Gal. vi. And therefore *Christ* says, “When you have done all things well, say, we are use-
“less servants.” Luke xvii. But when does an ambitious man say this? Fifthly, He walks not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh; and has not his heart raised and united to Heaven, but leaves it loose and dissipated with variety of earthly objects. Sixthly and lastly, When once a man suffers in himself a relish of ambition for honours, he is so allured by them as never to be satiated, and daily hankering after new ones, the more he obtains, the more he covets

covets to obtain; because he vainly conceits himself to be more than ordinarily honourable and worthy in the esteem of others, as well as his own. Thus does he deliver himself up a prey to ambition, the worst of vices, and the mother of many. But, to convince you of the malice of this vice, let St. *Bernard* speak for me.

Ambition (says he) is a subtle evil, a secret poison, a hidden pestilence, the author of all guile, the mother of all hypocrisy, the monster-getting parent of rancour, the moth of all virtues, the canker-worm of sanctity, the hardener of hearts, creating diseases from their cures, engendering sickness from medicines, and destroying all whom it basely supplants, as the latent enemy undermines a city to involve its inhabitants in the ruins of it. And what nourishes this dangerous vermin but the dissipation of the mind and the oblivion of truth? And what discovers this lurking traitor, and unkennels this worker of darkness, but the light of truth? Such is that truth which says, "What does it avail a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matth. xvi. And again, "The powerful shall suffer torments powerfully," Will. vi. It is this same truth that gives a man to reflect, how trivial is the com-

before in ambition; grievous the judgment
 attending it; how brief is its enjoyment,
 how and how obscure its end. And therefore
 of the third temptation, which Satan tried
 upon our Lord with, was ambition, when he
 offered him all the kingdoms of the
 world; to fall down and adore him. You
 see then, that ambition is the worship of
 the Devil, for which he promises his
 adorers in recompence, to lead them to
 worldly honours and glory. In another
 place the Saint says, 'We are fond indeed
 of rising, and covet to be exalted. For
 we are by nature noble creatures, and of a
 certain greatness of soul, and therefore
 it is natural in us to wish to be elevated.
 Yet woe to us if we follow him, who
 says, "I will sit on the mount of the tes-
 tament, in the skirts of the North." Isaiah
 xiv. O wretch! in the skirts of the North!
 that is too frigid a mount; however thou
 may'st covet power and eminence, we will
 not follow thee thither. Yet how many
 to this very day follow thy foul and fatal
 steps, nay, how few escape being enslaved
 by the lust of power! Oh unhappy crea-
 tures, whom do you thus follow? Who is
 your guide? Is not this the mount to
 which the Angel ascended, and fell a De-
 vil? Are you not aware that, after his
 fall, he tortured with envy, and wickedly
 anxious

ambitious to supplant mankind, he shewed
 them a like eminency, telling them, "You
 shall be like Gods, knowing good and
 evil." Gen. iii. And a little after the
 Saint adds, "Such the power of ambition,
 to deprive an Angel of angelic felicity.
 So the ambition of knowledge stripped
 man of the glory of immortality. Let a
 man try to ascend the steep of power, how
 many opponents, think you, will he meet
 with, how many repulses, and how diffi-
 cult a road will he find? And suppose he
 should attain the summit of his wishes,
 what has he wished? "The powerful
 shall be powerfully tormented," Wisd. vi.
 so that it is needless to enter into a detail
 of the present solitudes and anxieties
 which power produces. One ambitious
 of bloating knowledge, what labour must
 he not go through, what anxiety of spirit,
 and still shall hear, "though thou burst
 thyself, thou shalt not overtake it." His
 eyes shall be bathed in bitterness as often
 as he sees one whom he thinks himself in-
 ferior to, or fancies that others do. What
 if he swells himself with conceit? "I will
 destroy (says the Lord) the wisdom of
 the wise, and reprove the prudence of
 the prudent." 1 Cor. i. But to say no
 more, you have seen, Infancy, how much
 the steep of ambition, and thirst of know-
 ledge

ledge and power, is to be shunned by such
 as are in any ways terrified at the fall of one
 angel, and the ruin of man. Mount-
 "ains of Gellboe, neither snow nor rain
 "shall fall upon you." Yet what shall
 "we do? It behoves us to ascend; we are
 "born, and imbibed with a desire of eleva-
 "vation: Who then shall teach us a salutary
 "ascent? Who but he who tells us, that he
 "who is descended, he likewise is ascended?
 "It is to him we are to apply to learn the
 "right ascent, that we may not follow the
 "footsteps of that evil guide, or rather se-
 "ducer. For seeing that no one ascended,
 "He, the Most High, descended; and by
 "his descent, secured to us an easy and safe
 "ascent. He descended from the mount of
 "power, in suffering himself to be encircled
 "with the infirmities of the flesh; he de-
 "scended from the mount of science, in
 "the simplicity of his preaching, to save all
 "such as should sincerely believe. In reality,
 "what can seem more weak than the little
 "tender body and limbs of an infant? What
 "more void of science than a child? Who
 "less powerful than one whose limbs are
 "nailed to a tree, and whose very bones are
 "enumerated? And who would be thought
 "less wise than one who should voluntarily
 "part with his life, and make satisfaction
 "for damages he had not done? Thus you
 "see

' see how much he who descended, lessened
 ' and lowered himself beneath worldly power
 ' and wisdom. Nor could he ascend higher
 ' than he did in charity and goodness. But
 ' where is the wonder that *Christ* should
 ' climb by descending: when we have seen
 ' men and angels precipitate by attempting
 ' to rise.' The same Saint says elsewhere,
 ' Oh perverse ambition of the sons of *Adam*!
 ' Though it be a laborious task to ascend,
 ' and an easy matter to descend, they climb
 ' with levity, and descend with difficulty;
 ' prone to honours, and even to ecclesiasti-
 ' cal dignities, a too formidable weight for
 ' the very strength of an angel. But to fol-
 ' low thee, *Jesus*, no one is ready: and few
 ' can be dragged, much less led after your
 ' precepts.' Thus far St. *Bernard*. From
 what has been said, you may gather, gentle
 reader, how much it behoves you to fly
 worldly and false honour, and how certain
 it is that true honour is to be attained only
 by humility.

But what if some should flatter their love
 and ambition for learning and honours with
 the specious but vain pretext of rendering
 themselves more servicable to their neigh-
 bours in the affairs of their salvation? Will
 not St. *Bernard* answer them; ' Oh that
 ' they, who have thus ambitiously seized
 ' those honours, would but use them with

a fidelity equal to the confidence with which they thrust themselves into them! But I wish it does not prove impracticable to gather the sweet fruits of charity from the bitter plant of ambition. Now to have that thorough contempt for honours which they really deserve, requires a more than ordinary share of the sublimest virtue. For, as *St. John Chrysostom* observes, 'to be in the midst of honours, and make a right use of them, is like a man's conversing with a very beautiful young creature, and making a law to himself never to cast a loose look on her.' A man therefore undoubtedly stands in need of the greatest fortitude of mind to make a proper, and none but a proper use of the power and honours conferred upon him.

C H A P. XXXVI.

Our Lord prayed upon the mount; and, descending, walked on the waters: With some reflections on prayer.

AFTER the Disciples had gone on board and set sail, our Lord went up a high mountain, and remained there till the third watch of the night, in fervent prayer to his eternal

eternal Father. Whence you see that our Lord frequently spent his time in prayer, and often the whole or best part of the night. Behold him then in this devout exercise, how he humbles himself before his divine Father; and like a good shepherd, solicits for us his flock; and this in a state of mortification, of watching, and retirement. And why chiefly does he do this, but to set us the example of prayer, as he elsewhere recommended it to his Disciples both by word and example. 1. John ii. He told them, "it is necessary to pray and never cease;" proposing to them the examples of the judge and the widow, as related, Luke xviii. to exhort them to confidence in praying, and to perseverance in importuning; to which he added another example, of the friend, who lent the loaves to his friend, merely to avoid being any longer solicited. And all this was purposely meant to inculcate to us the virtue of prayer. And indeed, it is a virtue of the greatest efficacy towards obtaining all that is useful, and removing all that is hurtful to us.

Would you obtain patience to bear up against adversities; be assiduous in praying.

Would you obtain strength to overcome

G g trials
 said let fall, our Lord went up a high mountain, and remained there till the third

watch of the night, in fervent prayer to his Father.

* The manifold fruits of prayer.

trials and temptations ; be assiduous in praying. Would you become acquainted with, in order to avoid, the subtle deceits of Satan ; would you chearfully persist in the service of God, and tread the paths of mortification and affliction for his sake ; would you renounce all carnal desires, and wholly betake yourself to a spiritual life ; be assiduous in praying. If you wish to destroy evil thoughts ; be a man of prayer. If you are desirous to enrich your mind with holy reflections, and your heart with virtuous, fervent, and pious desires ; be a man of prayer. If you are willing to corroborate your good purposes with manly resolution and steady perseverance ; be a man of prayer. In a word, whether you mean to extirpate vice from, or implant virtue in your breast, make prayer your constant application. For it is by prayer you receive the unction of the Holy Ghost, who instructs the mind in all things. Prayer lifts a man to contemplation, and brings the soul to the embraces of her heavenly Spouse. Such are the power and efficacy of prayer. In confirmation of all this, without recurring to any of the numerous testimonies in holy writ, it is sufficient to recollect the many ignorant and illiterate persons who by prayer have obtained, and still daily obtain these fruits. Wherefore it highly concerns all, to give themselves

themselves up to the exercise of prayer, if they mean to be Christians; but this is more especially incumbent on persons in a religious state, who are supposed to be more at leisure.

To this, gentle reader, I very much exhort you; make it the principal business of life, after the necessary occupations of your state are complied with, to attend to prayer. Let prayer be your delight; and take pleasure in nothing so much as in conversing with God; which is done by prayer. But, that you may have the advice of a more able counsellor than I am, to determine you, hear what *St. Bernard* says to the purpose. ‘ They (says he) who make prayer their frequent study, are sensible of what I say. Oftentimes we approach the holy altar with a coldness of devotion, and kneel down to prayer with a frowardness of heart; but, persisting in it, suddenly we feel ourselves replenished with grace, the breast is nourished with the heavenly aliment, and the whole interior widens to the inundation of piety.’ And again in another place he says, ‘ As often as I talk of prayer methinks something inwardly says to me, whence is it that of all who persist in prayer, there are so few who are sensible of the fruits of prayer? We seem to return from prayer just as we went to

it; no one gives us any answer, or makes
 us any grant. But follow not your own
 experience; rather let faith direct you:
 for faith is ever true, but experience often
 otherwise. Now does not the truth of faith
 tell us by the mouth of *Christ*, "What-
 ever ye ask praying, believe that ye shall
 receive, and it shall be done unto you."
 Mark ii. Let none of you then, bre-
 thren, despise or think lightly of his own
 prayer; for he to whom we pray, does not.
 Scarce has our prayer gained utterance,
 when it is recorded by him; and one of
 the two we may infallibly depend on, that
 he either will grant what we ask, or what
 is more useful. We ourselves are igno-
 rant what it most behoves us to ask; but
 God compassionates our ignorance, and
 still receives our prayer so as to grant us
 what is better for us, instead of the useless
 or pernicious favours we solicit. So that
 prayer is never barren, provided it be
 made with the requisite condition men-
 tioned by the Psalmist, that is, delight in
 God. "Delight in the Lord, and he will
 grant you the petitions of your heart."
 Psalm xxxvi. Thus *St. Bernard*. And a
 little lower he adds, "Observe (says he)
 that such are called the petitions of the
 heart which reason dictates as judicious
 ones. Neither have you cause to com-
 plain,

plain, but rather to return God thanks with sentiments of utmost gratitude, since such is the great care he takes of you, that when you ask what is useless; or perhaps detrimental to you, he grants you something better in the stead of it: like a tender parent who gives a child bread when he asks it, but gives him not a knife for asking. You are to take notice that the petitions of your heart are wholly contained under these three heads, (nor can I see ought which a good man can covet that is not included in them) namely, the goods in this life, which are those of the body and those of the soul, and are two of the three heads; the third is, the beatitude of eternity. Wonder not that I include the goods of the body among the blessings which we are to ask of God; for corporal gifts are no less his than those of the spirit, and therefore are to be asked of him as far as is necessary or conducive to the spiritual: for example, we may, nay ought to, ask and hope for the necessary support to enable us to serve God. But our greatest solicitude, our most fervent and pious importunity, ought to be for obtaining virtue and the grace of God for our souls in this life, and glory in the next, where both body and soul will be crowned with compleat felicity.' And a little farther he says,

says, ' Let prayer then for temporals be confined to absolute necessities: let prayer for the spiritual profit of the soul be free from all impurity, and directed wholly to the divine pleasure: but let prayer for eternal happiness, with all due regard to humility, be bold and daring, with presumption on God's mercy alone.' ' He that would pray apart, and with fruit, (says the same Saint) must chuse not only his place, but his time. The time of fasting is certainly the fittest; especially when the night hushes nature in a profound silence, for then prayer will be both purer and more free. Rise, according to the Prophet *Jeremiah*; Lam. ii. " Rise in the night, in the beginning of your vigils, and pour out your soul like water in the presence of the Lord your God." ' How securly does prayer ascend by night, when no witnesses are by but God and his angel who presents it at the altar of Heaven! How grateful and pleasing does modest secrecy make it appear in the eyes of the Almighty! How serene and undisturbed does it reach his ears, when removed from noise and hurry! And finally, How pure and sincere must it be when unsullied with worldly sollicitudes, and not tempted by public applause and flattery? It was for this reason that the spouse in the *Canticles* retreated to the privacy of her

her bedchamber, and to the stillness of the
 night, to seek her spouse the divine word,
 that is, to pray. For in reality they are
 one and the same thing. Since, otherwise,
 you cannot be properly said to pray, if in
 your prayers you seek ought beside the di-
 vine word, or on his account, for he con-
 tains all you can seek. In him are the re-
 medies for all diseases, supplies for all ne-
 cessities, helps for all defects, and variety
 of perfection. In him, in short, you may
 find whatever is necessary, fit, or useful.
 It is needless and useless therefore to ask
 any thing beside the divine word, who
 himself contains all things. For even if
 we should, when necessity requires, ask of
 God any temporal favours, provided we
 ask them as we ought, for the sake of the
 divine word, we cannot so much be said
 to ask the temporals as the word, for
 whose sake we asked them.' Thus far St.
Bernard.

You have heard then, gentle reader, the
 beautiful words of St. *Bernard*, that sublime
 contemplative, that refined taster of prayer
 and spiritual sweetness. Reflect then on
 what he says, that you may be able to relish
 it: for to this end it is that I the more fre-
 quently and willingly intersperse his words,
 which are not only full of spirit and pene-
 trating to the heart, but eloquent, and pa-
 thetically

thetically moving to the service of God. He was truly full of wisdom, and eminent in sanctity: endeavour therefore, I intreat you, to imitate him; put his wholesome counsels in practice, that my quoting him may gain its purpose. But let us return to our Lord *Jesus*.

While our Lord was praying on the mount, the Disciples at sea were in great affliction and dismay, the wind being contrary to them, and the vessel harrassed with tempestuous weather. Behold then, and compassionate them amidst this severe tribulation. They are attacked by a storm, in a dark night, and without their Lord. A severe tribulation indeed! At the fourth hour of the night, our Lord descended from the mount, and walking on the waves, came up to them. Contemplate here our Lord, who, fatigued with long watching and prolix praying, descends barefooted from this steep and perhaps craggy mountain, and walks upon the waters as on dry land! Thus the creature knew and confessed its Creator. When he drew near to the ship, his Disciples seeing him, and thinking him a shadow or spectre, screamed out: But our gracious Lord, unwilling to terrify or afflict them any longer, pacified them, saying, "I am here, be not afraid." Matth. xiv. Then *Peter*, confident of the Lord's power, began, with

with his leave, to walk likewise on the waters; but desponding, was about to sink, when our Lord stretched forth his right-hand, and saved him from sinking. The gloss upon this place tells us, that our Lord made him walk on the waters, to give him a proof of his divine power; and suffered him to plunge in them, to remind him of his weakness, and not proudly to presume on an equality with God.

Our Lord afterwards entered the vessel, the storm ceased, and serenity ensued. The Disciples received him with reverence, rejoiced, and felt a more refined tranquility than before. Contemplate him and his Disciples in every one of these passages, which are rich in matter of devotion. You may likewise draw from them the moral reflection, that our Lord frequently does the same with us in a spiritual sense, suffering his beloved to be inwardly or outwardly afflicted in this world, "because he scourges every child whom he accepts." Heb. xii. 'For they (as the Apostle adds) who are out of discipline, are not legitimate children, but bastards.' It is necessary therefore for us to undergo trials and afflictions in this life; from thence we gain knowledge, acquire virtues, and learn to keep them when acquired; and what is more, on them we build all our hopes of future and eternal rewards.

For which reason, we ought not to repine and be impatient under them, but to love and like them. But because the advantage of tribulation is great, and yet unknown to many, we therefore look upon them as difficult, nay, insupportable. Therefore, gentle reader, that you may be instructed to bear them as you ought, I will, according to my custom, bring you the authority of St. Bernard. 'Tribulation (says he) is useful, it works a trial, and leads to glory. "I am with him (says the Lord) in tribulation." Let us give thanks then to the Father of Mercies, who is with us in tribulations, and consoles us in every affliction. For, as I said, tribulation is a necessary good, which is changed into glory, and terminates in joy: a long, an ample, a plenary joy, which no one shall snatch from us. Tribulation is necessary; and this necessity brings forth our crown. Let us not despise this seed, brethren; it is a small one indeed, but great in the fruits it is big with. Grant it to be tasteless, grant it to be bitter, even grant it to be a grain of mustard. Let us not look upon the outside, but on what it contains. What you behold of it is temporal, the rest you cannot see, is eternal." And lower down, he says: "I am with him in tribulation, (saith the Lord) and I shall require no other merit than tribulation."

"vation." How good then is it for us to
 "adhere to God. I will do so then, and
 "ever place all my confidence in him, for
 "that he says, "I am with him in tribula-
 "tion; I will free him and glorify him."
 "Psalm xc. My delight (says he) is to
 "be with the children of men." He
 "came upon earth to be with those who are
 "sad at heart, and to be with us in our tri-
 "bulations. But there shall come a time
 "when we ourselves shall be lifted to meet
 "Christ in the air, and thence to remain for-
 "ever with our divine Lord, provided we,
 "in the mean time, endeavour to have him
 "with us here. O Lord, it is good for me
 "to be troubled so thou be but with me:
 "Nay infinitely better is it than banqueting
 "or triumphing without thee. The furnace
 "tries the potter's vessels; and tribulation
 "the just. What are we afraid of? Why
 "do we despond? Wherefore do we fly
 "the furnace? Does the fire rage? No
 "matter; the Lord is with us in tribulation.
 "If God is with us, who dare be against us?
 "What does it import who it is? If he has
 "but hold, who shall make him quit his
 "hold? Lastly, If he glorifies, who has
 "power to humble?" Let us not then
 "(says the same Saint) glory in hope alone,
 "but (even in tribulation) I will gladly
 "glory in my weakness, that the strength

“of *Christ* may dwell within me,” says St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. O desirable weakness which is rewarded with the strength of *Christ*! Ah who will give me not only to be weak, but event to faint, and be lost to myself, so I be but strong in force of the Lord of forces. For strength is perfected by weakness, and virtue gathers force from infirmity, as the same Apostle says. And again: When I am weakened then I grow strong.’ It is for this reason, (adds St. Bernard elsewhere) that the spouse in the *Canticles* calls her Beloved not a bundle, but a little bundle; for that love make every burthen light, and every grievance portable. Well might she call him little, for “a little one was born to us.” But more especially for that “the sufferings of this world are not to be compared to the future glory which will be revealed in us,” if we credit St. Paul, Rom. viii. “For our present momentary light tribulation will, on high, work in us an eternal weight of glory beyond measure,” as the same Apostle says, 2 Cor. iii. And that will one day be a heap of glory to us which is now but a little bundle of bitterness. And may it not truly be called a little bundle, since *Christ* himself tells us, that his yoke is sweet, and his burthen light? Not that it is light in itself; for the

the bitterness of death is a severe and dreadful trial, if it be considered only on its own account; yet love makes it seem light and easy.' The same Saint elsewhere says, 'If we cast an eye over the whole Church, we may easily observe, that the spiritual members of it are much more combated than the carnal are. This is the craft of pride, envy and malice, always to disturb the most perfect: according to the words of the Prophet, "his food is of the chosen sort." Abac. i. 'Nay, it is the dispensation of divine providence that it should be so; not suffering the weak to be tried beyond their strength, but drawing even advantage from temptation; while the more perfect, but encrease the number and glory of their triumphs over their enemy, in every fresh trial they undergo. With much more eagerness and warmth the adversary struggles to defeat the Church's right wing rather than her left; not labouring so much to defeat the main body of her forces immediately, as indirectly to weaken it by wasting the very soul of it.' Now (adds the Saint a little lower) there all our resistance is required, where necessity urges most, where the weight of war hangs heaviest, where the battle is the warmest, and the combat most pressing.' Again he adds; 'This the great

' great grace of God to his Church; this his
 ' mercy towards his servants; this his re-
 ' gard for his elect, that covering her left
 ' wing to spare and wink at its weakness,
 ' he heads and supports her right: Hence
 ' the Prophet, in the person of the Church,
 ' says; " I took care to have the Lord al-
 " ways before me, for he is at my right-
 " hand that I may not be moved." Psalm
 xv. And again: ' O good *Jesus*! be thou
 ' always on my right; take hold of my right-
 ' hand, for I know that no adversary can
 ' affect me, if no iniquity sways me. Let
 ' my left be harrassed and mutilated, let it
 ' be assailed with injuries and aggravated
 ' with insults; I willingly sacrifice it, so I
 ' be under your custody and protection, so
 ' that you stand at my right-hand.' And
 elsewhere, ' It is one thing (says he) to be
 ' actuated by virtue, another to be ruled by
 ' wisdom; it is one thing to be absolute in
 ' virtue, another to be delightd in sweet-
 ' ness. For though wisdom be powerful,
 ' and virtue sweet, yet, to give words their
 ' true meaning, vigour belongs properly to
 ' virtue; and serenity of soul, with a kind
 ' of spiritual sweetness, is the certain mark
 ' of wisdom. And this I believe the Apostle
 ' meant, when, after many fine counsels re-
 ' lating to virtue, he adds, that wisdom
 ' consists in sweetness in the Holy Spirit.

eggo!

To

'To resist then, to repel force with force,
 ' (which are properties strictly belonging to
 ' virtue) are undoubtedly attended with
 ' real honour; but that honour a very labo-
 ' rious one. For there is a wide difference
 ' between the painful defence of their ho-
 ' nour, and quiet possession of it. In short,
 ' to be actuated by virtue, and to be in full
 ' enjoyment of virtue, are two things.
 ' Whatever virtue produces, wisdom en-
 ' joys: and what wisdom disposes and re-
 ' solves, virtue moderates, and puts in prac-
 ' tice. "Write wisdom in your leisure,"
 ' says the wise man; Eccles. xxxviii. The
 ' leisure then of wisdom is business; and
 ' the more wisdom is at leisure, the more
 ' active it is in its proper sphere. On the
 ' other side, virtue shines the brighter for
 ' exercise: and to be properly active, is the
 ' proof of virtue. So that if any one
 ' should define wisdom to be the love of
 ' virtue, I cannot see how he would be
 ' wrong. For where there is love, labour
 ' becomes sweetness. And therefore, per-
 ' haps, *Wisdom* (which in Latin is *Sapientia*)
 ' takes its etymology from *Sapor*, relish, as
 ' a kind of quality or ingredient added to
 ' virtue, which gives a relish to that which
 ' would otherwise be merely tasteless and
 ' insipid. Nor should I think it amiss to
 ' define wisdom, the relish of good. It be-
 ' longs

'longs then to virtue (adds the Saint) To
 'bear troubles with fortitude; but to wis-
 'dom, the rejoicing in tribulations. To
 'comfort your heart, and sustain the Lord;
 'is the part of virtue; but to taste and see
 'that the Lord is sweet, is that of wisdom.
 'And that the properties of both may the
 'better appear from nature itself, let it suf-
 'fice to observe, that modesty of mind is a
 'certain proof of wisdom, as constancy is
 'of virtue. And right it is that wisdom
 'should follow virtue, since virtue is a kind
 'of solid foundation on which wisdom raises
 'the superstructure.' In another place he
 'says, 'Happy the man who directs the suf-
 'ferings and passions with a view of justice,
 'so as to bear all he suffers for the Son of
 'God, without complaining at heart, but
 'with praise and thanksgiving. He who
 'carries himself thus, properly takes up his
 'bed and walks. Our bed is our body, in
 'which before we were languishing, subser-
 'vient to our unruly desires and lawless
 'appetites. We then take up this bed when
 'we compel it to obey the spirit.' The
 'spirit (says the same Saint) is truly mani-
 'fold which inspires, so many different
 'ways, the children of men in such a man-
 'ner, that no one can abscond, or screen
 'himself from its heat. Inasmuch, that it
 'is given them for their use, for miracles,
 'for

' for salvation, for help, for comfort, and
 ' for fervor in devotion. For the uses of
 ' life, it is given to the good and bad; and
 ' yields alike to the worthy and the unwor-
 ' thy abundance of advantages, without
 ' any limits prefixed to it: and therefore
 ' he would be highly ungrateful who should
 ' deny or not acknowledge these benefits of
 ' the spirit. It is given for miracles, in the
 ' many signs, prodigies, and wondrous
 ' virtues it operates by the hands of some.
 ' It was the spirit operated so many marvel-
 ' lous works in antiquity, and which con-
 ' firms our faith, in old miracles, by the
 ' daily new ones it manifests to us. But as
 ' the gift of miracles is not always useful to
 ' the operator of them, therefore the spirit
 ' is likewise given to salvation, as when,
 ' with all our heart, we turn to the Lord
 ' our God. It is given for help, when, in
 ' the midst of our struggles with trials of
 ' trouble, it assists our weakness. And,
 ' when the spirit gives testimony to our spi-
 ' rit that we are the children of God, that
 ' inspiration is given us for our comfort.
 ' Finally, the spirit is given for fervor,
 ' when, breathing strongly into the hearts
 ' of the perfect, it kindles a powerful flame
 ' of divine charity, by the means of which,
 ' in the hope of the children of God, we
 ' glory in tribulations, deem scandal an ho-

'nour to us, rejoice in the injuries done us,
 'and are transported with pleasure when
 'loaded with contempt. To all of us then
 'the spirit is given for salvation, but not
 'alike for fervor. There are but few re-
 'plenished with this spirit; but very few,
 'who covet and pursue it. We are con-
 'tent with our own narrowness; and nei-
 'ther labour to breathe liberty, nor even
 'so much as to aspire to it.' Thus far St.
Bernard.

You have seen then, gentle reader, the
 many and beautiful reasons which the Saint
 gives, to shew how necessary afflictions are
 for us. Wonder not then that our Saviour
 should suffer his Disciples, whom he loved
 so tenderly, to be harrassed with tempests,
 tears, and afflictions, since you see the great
 usefulness of them. We frequently read of
 their being agitated with storms and contrary
 winds, but never read of their being once
 shipwrecked. Which ought to serve you as
 a lesson to stand firm, patient, and chearful
 amidst the contradictions and trials you may
 meet with; and so to exercise yourself in the
 practice of the spirit, as, filled with its fer-
 vor, to covet sufferings for the sake of our
 Lord *Jesus Christ*, who chose this way for
 himself and his followers, and was the first
 to tread it before us.

C H A P. XXXVII. b

Christ relieves the daughter of the woman of Chanaan, who was possessed with the Devil: and how our Angel Guardians faithfully assist us.

AS our Lord Jesus was going about exercising the laborious function of preaching, and curing the infirm, there came to him a woman of *Chanaan* (that is, of the land of *Chanaan*, and of the race of the *Gentiles*) beseeching him to heal her daughter, who was possessed with the Devil. For her faith was so great, that she firmly believed, without hesitation, that he could do it. And though our Lord as yet made her no answer, she still persisted, and persevered to cry out, and to beg of him to have mercy on her: insomuch that his Disciples, compassionating her cries, earnestly intreated him in her behalf. And, when our Lord at length made answer, that "it was not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs;" she, with profound humility, replied, that "the dogs also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Wherefore, she was thought worthy to be heard, and was granted what she petitioned for.

Consider here our Lord *Jesus* and his Disciples, and have recourse to the general heads of meditation, as I have before prescribed to you. Reflect however, at the same time, on the virtues of this woman, and endeavour to profit by them, which were chiefly three. The first was, her great faith, which even extended to her daughter, and for which she was praised by our Lord. The second was, her perseverent prayer; since she was not only perseverent but importunate: which importunity is also acceptable to God, as I have before shewed you on other occasions. The third was, her profound humility; for she neither denied herself to be included in the comparison which our Lord made, nor thought herself worthy to be reckoned among his children, or to have the bread itself, but was content to receive the crumbs only. Wherefore she greatly humbled herself, and therefore obtained what she sought for. The same will happen to you if, with a sincere, pure, and faithful mind, persevering in prayer, you humble yourself before God, esteeming yourself unworthy to receive any good from him, you may then undoubtedly expect to obtain what you ask for. And as the Apostles interceded for the *Chananæan*, so will your Angel Guardian intercede for you, and offer up your prayers to the Almighty. Upon

which

which head, hear *St. Bernard*; "Often when
 my soul has been sighing, praying, and tor-
 menting itself with anxiety for its hea-
 venly spouse, and that the dearly desired;
 and so much sought-after, has, in his own
 mercy, condescended to meet her, I
 thought she might, from her own expe-
 rience, repeat that of *Jeremiah*: "Thou
 art good, O Lord, to such as hope in thee;
 to the soul which seeks thee." Nay, the
 very angel who accompanies our heavenly
 spouse, is the previous minister, or rather
 plenipotentiary, of the secret salutation,
 this angel, I say, with what joy, with what
 delight, with what transport, turning to
 our Lord, does he say; "I render thanks
 to thee, O Lord of Majesty;" "Because
 thou hast given him his heart's desire; and
 hast not withholden the request of his lips."
Psal. xx. "He it is who sedulously, and in
 every place, as a constant pursuer of the
 soul, never ceases to admonish it by con-
 tinual suggestions, saying; "Delight thy-
 self in the Lord, and he will give thee the
 desires of thy heart." And again: "Wait
 on the Lord, and keep his ways. Though
 he tarry, wait for him, because he will
 surely come, he will not tarry." *Haba. ii.*
 And to the Lord he says; "As the hart
 panteth after the water-brooks, so this
 panteth after thee, O God." *Psal. xli.*
 "He

"He hath desired thee in the night, and thy
 "spirit in the inmost recess of his heart.
 "From the morning he hath watched unto
 "thee." And again: "The whole day he
 "hath stretched out his hands unto thee:
 "Dismiss her, for she crieth after thee. Re-
 "turn, O Lord, and vouchsafe to give ear:
 "Look down from Heaven and behold, and
 "visit the forsaken." The faithful para-
 "nymph who is conscious without envy of
 "the natural love between the soul and her
 "spouse, seeks not any thing for himself,
 "but only the glory of his Lord. He passeth
 "mutual between the heavenly spouse and
 "his beloved, offering her vows, and bring-
 "ing his gifts, exciting her to love, and
 "moving him to mercy. Sometimes like-
 "wise, though but seldom, he renders them
 "present to himself; either attracting her,
 "or inviting him, for he is familiarly
 "known in the sacred mansion of Heaven,
 "nor fears a repulse, seeing daily the face
 "of the heavenly Father." Thus far St.

Bernard.

C. H. A. P.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

The Pharisees and others scandalized at the words of our Lord Jesus.

WE ought never to wonder that some take occasion of scandal at our words and actions, though never so good and perfect; seeing that this often befel our Lord himself, who could not err in word or deed. For it happened at a certain time that the Pharisees asked our Lord, why his Disciples did not wash their hands before they eat? Our Lord answered them sharply, and reprov'd them for having more regard to the outward cleanliness of the body, than the inward purity of the soul. At which answer they were scandalized; but our Lord regarded them not.

At another time, as he was preaching and teaching in the Synagogue, some of his Disciples being too worldly, and not understanding him, went away. But to his twelve Disciples he said, "Will ye also go away?" And *Peter*, in the name of the rest, answered him; "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Consider him in these and the like things; how he speaks with authority, and teaches with true doctrine, having no regard to the scandal of the weak and

and simple. Wherefore, we must observe, First, That we are not to depart from the virtue of justice on account of another person being scandalized. Secondly, That we ought to be more careful for the inward purity of our hearts, than solicitous for the outward cleanliness of the body; which thing our Lord, in another place, more expressly recommends, saying, in St. Luke; that "we must live according to the spirit;" so that the words of our Redeemer should not seem strange to us, as they did to those Disciples, who, when Christ said in St. John; "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man, &c." could not bear to hear them; and therefore, being scandalized, departed from him; but we should rather acknowledge them to be the words of eternal life; that, together with the twelve that remained with him, we may endeavour perfectly to imitate him.

C H A P. XXXIX

The reward which our Lord Jesus has promised to those who forsake all for him.

AS St. Peter, the prudent and faithful Disciple of Jesus Christ, on a certain occasion asked him, in the name of the rest of his

his brethren the Apostles, concerning what reward they should have who had quitted the world, and all things in it, for the love of him: Our Lord, amongst other things, answered him: 'That they who should forsake all worldly things to follow him, should receive a reward of a hundred-fold in this world, and life everlasting in the next.' Consider well the greatness of this reward; exult with the utmost joy, and render praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, who has placed thee in a state of negotiating so advantageously for thyself as to be able to gain a hundred for one, and withal, eternal life. This hundred-fold, however, is not to be understood of temporal things, but of spiritual ones only; that is, of inward consolation, and heavenly virtues, which we shall prove by experience, and not acquire by knowledge. For when the soul begins to have a true relish for the virtues of poverty, charity, patience, and other Christian perfections, and takes pleasure and delight in the constant practice of them, may it not truly be said of her, that she has received a hundred-fold? And if at length she still rises to more sublime degrees of perfection, so as frequently to partake of the inward visits of her divine and heavenly spouse, may it not again be affirmed with truth, that she has received a thousand-fold for all what ever

it be that he has left here for his sake? You see then the veracity of the words which were uttered by eternal truth, who never fails even in this world, to reward the soul that is truly devoted to him with a hundred-fold, and this not once, but frequently, affecting it often with so deep a sense of his divine love as to make it esteem as dung every thing it has forsaken, and the whole world itself, for the sake of obtaining the possessing of its divine and heavenly spouse. But that you may be more amply instructed in relation to this hundred-fold gift of the gospel, and may reap more benefit from it, hear what St. *Bernard* says on that head.

‘ If any one (says he) should say, shew me the hundred-fold that is promised, and I will freely quit all things of this life to obtain it. But why should I shew it? Since faith, which has human reason for its voucher, can have no merit? Will you sooner give credit to the evidence of man than believe the promises of truth? You err by diving too deeply into the hidden mysteries of God. Unless you believe, you cannot understand. It is a hidden manna; and in the apocalypse of St. *John* a new name is promised that shall overcome; a name which no one knows but he that receives it. And again he says: Does he not possess all things to whom all things

things are turned to good? Has he not received a hundred-fold who is filled with the Holy Ghost, and possesses *Christ* in his breast? Or rather, shall we not say, that the Visitation of the Holy Ghost, and the presence of *Jesus Christ*, far exceed the hundred-fold gift of any other thing?

“Oh! how great is the multitude of thy sweetness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee!”

saith the royal Psalmist, Psalm xxx. Observe here how the soul breaks forth into the remembrance of the abundance of spiritual sweetness, and how, in endeavouring to express herself, she multiplies her words. “How great (saith she) is the multitude, &c. This hundred-fold, therefore, is the adoption of children, the freedom and first-fruits of the spirit, the delight of charity, the glory of a good conscience, and the kingdom of God which is within us. It consists not in meat or drink; but in the justice, peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost. A joy indeed, not in the hopes of a future glory, but rather in the present suffering or tribulations. This is that fire which *Christ* would have vehemently to be enkindled. This is the virtue which made *St. Andrew* so cheerfully embrace the cross he was to die on, *St.*

Lawrence despise the butcheries of his cruel tyrants, and which made *St. Stephen* at his death pray for those who stoned him.— This is that peace which *Christ* left to those that should follow him, for it is a “gift, and peace to the elect of God.” It is the peace of the father, and a gift of future glory. It exceeds all sense, and is not to be compared with any thing under the Heavens, or whatever is desireable in this world. This is the plentiful grace of devotion, and the holy unction teaching us all those things, which they prove who have experienced, and they who have not experienced are ignorant of.’ Thus far *St. Bernard*. Rejoice then, and be glad, and as I have said before, render thanks to God that he has called you to receive this hundred-fold, and invited you to enter often into this paradise of joy, which by the study and exercise of prayer, you may hope to obtain.

C H A P. XL.

Our Lord Jesus asked his Disciples what the Jews said of him.

AS our blessed Lord was coming into the quarters of *Cæsarea Philippi*, he asked his Disciples what the Jews said of him, and likewise,

likewise, whom they thought him to be, and other things. Some of them answered, and said, "Some take you for John the Baptist, " others for Elias, and others for Jeremiah, " or one of the Prophets. But *Peter*, for himself and the rest, answered; "Thou art " Christ the Son of the living God." And our Lord said to him; "Thou art *Peter*, " and upon this Rock I will build my " Church, and the gates of Hell shall not " prevail against it." And at the same time gave him the keys of Heaven, the power to loose or bind upon Earth. Behold here then, pious reader, both our Lord and his Disciples, and contemplate them according to the general rules before given you. And observe moreover, that *Peter*, whom *Christ* had so exalted above the rest, was a little after called *Satan* by the same *Christ*, because, through the too great attachment which *Peter* had to the visible presence of *Christ*'s humanity, he endeavoured to persuade him from suffering, and from going through his Passion. Do you likewise follow the example of *Christ*, and esteem them to be your enemies who endeavour to draw you from the practice of spiritual exercises for the sake of any temporal view or corporal alleviation.

C H A P. XLI.

*The glorious Transfiguration of our Lord
Jesus on mount Tabor.*

OUR Lord Jesus desirous to strengthen his Apostles in the steadfast belief both of his divinity and humanity, first shewed them that he was perfect man, by living among them as man: and that he was also perfect God, by the wonderful miracles he wrought, which far surpassed the power and nature of a pure man. He had likewise farther told them, that, as man, he should suffer a most painful and approbrious death; and afterwards rise again gloriously to life, as he was God. After all this he concluded and said; that there were some of them which were then present, who should not see death till they had first seen the son of man (which was himself) coming in his kingdom; that is to say, beheld him in his glorious Transfiguration, and saw his sacred humanity resplendently shining with a wonderful brightness, as they should afterwards behold him in his heavenly glory.

To this purpose therefore, about eight days after, he took with him three of his Disciples, *Peter, James and John*, and went up to the top of a high mountain called *Tabor*,

bor, and was there transfigured before them: that is, he was so altered and changed from his common likeness, that he put on that beautiful and glorious form in which he was to appear seated in the high throne of Majesty, so that his face and countenance became bright as the sun, and his garments were as white as snow.

And presently there appeared *Moses* and *Elias* speaking with him concerning his sacred Passion, which he was to undergo in *Jerusalem*, and said; 'Lord, it is not expedient for thee to die, because one drop only of thy precious blood is sufficient to redeem the world.' But our Lord *Jesus* answered; "The good pastor giveth his life for his sheep: So, therefore, it behoves ~~me to do.~~" The Apostles remained extatic amidst this glorious vision: and St. *Peter*, above the rest, being forgetful of all earthly things, was desirous of remaining there in possession of that glance of bliss, and therefore said; "Lord, it is good for us to be here; If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for *Moses*, and one for *Elias*." John xvii. But, as the holy Evangelist takes notice, "He knew not what he said," in desiring to continue with our Lord *Jesus* in that place of bliss, before he had suffered that painful death which he had before told them
he

he was first to do. The Holy Ghost, like
 wife appearing in the brightness of a cloud,
 overshadowed them, and out of the cloud
 there came a voice from Heaven, saying,
 "This is my beloved Son in whom I am
 well pleased, hear ye him." The Apostles,
 trembling with fear at this voice, fell
 flat with their faces to the ground; but our
 Lord Jesus raised them, and bid them not
 to fear: and lifting up their eyes, and look-
 ing around them, they saw none but him
 alone. Contemplate well these passages,
 and endeavour to render yourself present,
 by devout meditation, to the things already
 said, because they contain most great and
 sublime mysteries.

C H A P. XLII.

*Our Lord Jesus casts the buyers and sellers
 out of the Temple.*

OUR Lord Jesus, at two several times, cast
 the buyers and sellers out of the Tem-
 ple; which action, amongst all the miracles
 he wrought, seems most strange and won-
 derful. For when he wrought other mira-
 cles among them, in which he evidently de-
 clared the power of his Godhead, yet those
 perverse

perverse people, the Scribes and Pharisees, blasphemed and contemned him for them: But at this time though, there were great multitudes assembled together in the Temple, yet they had not power to resist or withstand him; but, with a scourge made of cords, he drove them all out before him. The reason of this was; that his inward zeal and fervor being vehemently enkindled in seeing his heavenly Father so much dishonoured, especially in that place where he ought to have been the most honoured and worshipped; made him appear to them with a terrible and dreadful countenance, so that they were affrighted and had not power to resist him. Consider him here attentively, and compassionate him, for he is full of compassionate grief: but, at the same time, fear. For it is a dreadful example that ought to be a considered by all men; but more especially by such who have any office or authority in the Church of God, and by all religious persons who are placed in the House of God, to serve him in devout prayer and other holy and spiritual exercises. For if such idly busy themselves, and meddle with worldly affairs, they may justly fear the wrath and indignation of God against them, and apprehend the danger of being cast out of his grace in this life, and out of his eternal glory in the life to come.

CHAP. XLIII.

The sick man that was healed at the water in Jerusalem; called Probatica Piscina.

THERE was in the city of Jerusalem a standing water, in the nature of a pond, in which the sheep were washed that were to be offered in sacrifice. Where also, according to the opinion of the Fathers, afterwards lay hid the wood of the holy cross. This water once in every year, by particular appointment of God, was stirred by an angel, and the sick person that descended first into it after the angel had stirred it was immediately healed of his infirmity: wherefore great multitudes of sick and languishing people remained continually near the water, expecting it to be moved by the angel. Among these there was a sick man, lying on his bed, who had been ill of the palsy thirty-eight years, whom our Lord Jesus healed on the Sabbath-day. Here, according to your usual method, behold our Lord how humbly he approaches the sick man and speaks to him. For in this action there are three things worthy your devoutest attention. The first is, that our Lord Jesus asked the sick person, whether he would be healed or not?

not? By which we are given to understand, that our Lord, without our consent, will not bestow salvation upon us. Wherefore all stubborn and sinful persons, who neither desire, nor yet will give consent to such internal motions as God inspireth them with for their salvation, are undoubtedly without excuse. For as *St. Augustine* saith; 'He that made thee without thee, cannot save thee without thee.'

The second thing which is to be observed is, that we ought to be careful after we are freed and cleansed from sin, not to fall willfully into it again, lest our crime for so doing be afterwards by our Lord punished with more severity. Wherefore he said to the sick man whom he had restored, "Go thy way and sin no more, lest worse happen unto thee."

The third thing which we ought to consider is, that wicked men usually misconstrue the good works of others, and look upon them with an evil eye: but good men act the contrary. For thus the *Jews*, full of envy, when they saw the sick man miraculously cured by our Lord *Jesus*, and carrying away his bed on the Sabbath-day, they immediately told him, "that it was not lawful to do it on the Sabbath-day;" to whom he answered; "That he who had made him whole, said to him, 'take up thy

“thy bed and walk.” Before this, they asked him not who it was that had healed him; but began to carp at what displeased them, and as they thought reprehensible, and took no notice at all of the good work which was commendable, and so manifestly wrought before them. This is the manner of all wicked men to turn every thing to the worst, which good men convert to the best. For they who lead a spiritual life interpret all things in the best manner to the honour and glory of God, whether prosperity or adversity, knowing that every thing which comes to pass is through his holy will or permission; and therefore judge the best of, and reap thence great increase of merit, as *St. Bernard* teaches, saying: Pry not too far into other men’s lives, nor rashly judge of their actions. Think no evil of thy neighbour, but if thou see any thing that is bad, excuse at least his intention if you cannot his works: imagine the cause to be ignorance, inadvertency, or an accident. And if his crimes are beyond all dissimulation, say at least to yourself; It was the effect of a violent temptation: had it been as powerful in me, what destruction would it not have wrought? Thus far *St. Bernard*. That the good reap benefit from all things, even from their own and other men’s sins, from the things most hurtful,

Hurtful, and from the works of the Devil himself; St. Bernard thus argues: "Though the irrational and animal part cannot attain to what is spiritual, yet it must be owned that, by the bodily service it does, it very much helps those to obtain it who turn the use of all temporal and worldly things to the eternal advantage of their souls, by making use of the things of this life as if they used them not." And again: "Though there are some creatures which as to their use are found inconvenient, and even pernicious, yet it is certain that they contribute to the good of temporal and worldly men. For they have ever something that may turn to the good of those who, according their resolution are called Saints, if not by subministering nourishment or performing their due office, at least by exercising their mind by the help of him who is always ready to those who make use of their reason, helping them to make a proficiency in good discipline; by whom also, "The invisible things of God are seen, being understood by those things which are made." Rom. i. In short, he that has grace enough to take all things in good part, and to suppose that all which God shall send is for the best, shall be enabled to suffer many trials and tribulations with little pain; and by daily exercise obtain

obtain at length so great a peace and tranquillity of mind, that seldom or never any thing shall offend or molest him, but that shall be verified in him, which the wise man saith; "Whatever shall happen to the just man it shall not make him sorry." Prov. xii.

C H A P. XLIV.

Our Lord Jesus received by the two sisters Mary and Martha; and of the two sorts of lives signified by the same, that is, active and contemplative.

IT happened on a certain time that our Lord Jesus went with his Disciples to the city of *Bethania*, to a house named the castle of *Martha* and *Mary*. And they, whose love and affections was wholly placed in him, were exceeding glad at his coming, and received him with all possible joy and respect. And *Martha*, the elder sister, who had the care and government of the house, went immediately to provide meat for him and his Disciples. But *Mary* her sister, forgetting as it were all corporal food, and desiring to feed her soul with the fervent love of her dear Saviour *Jesus*, sat herself down on

on the ground beside his feet. And as our Lord, who was never idle, was talking, according to his usual custom, of those things which regard eternal life, she, with her heart and thoughts fixed on him, attentively listened to his blessed words, and took a pleasure beyond expression, in the exposition of his heavenly doctrine. *Martha*, who was busy in making ready the provision for our Lord and his Disciples, seeing her sister sitting idly as it were at his feet, was grievously troubled at it, and therefore made her complaint to our Lord as if he had no regard for her, and begged him to bid her sister to rise and help her.

Mary, at the voice of her sister, awakened as it were from the depth of a sweet and quiet sleep, and fearing lest she should be disturbed from that sweet contentment and quiet repose in which her soul was in, always obedient to the will of God, spoke nothing, but reverently bowing down her face to the ground, she humbly waited to hear what our Lord would say to her. But our Lord, answering in her behalf, said unto *Martha*: "*Martha, Martha*, thou art careful and art troubled about many things: "*But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.*"

At

At this answer of our Lord *Jesus*, *Mary* was greatly comforted, and sat with more confidence at his sacred feet, pursuing with perseverance, her former purpose. But at length, when all things were ready for his refection, and he had done speaking, she arose, fetched water to wash his hands, and remaining there present, diligently served him with all things he wanted. Consider here attentively, pious reader, our Lord entering this house, and with what extreme joy they receive him, together with all that passed before-mentioned, because from thence you may gather most beautiful matter for your devout meditation.

You must know then, that by these two holy sisters, the Fathers understand two different states of Life, that is, the one active, the other contemplative. To treat of these would be a subject of a very long extent. But though I am convinced that it is no ways necessary to dwell long upon it, I will, nevertheless, say something on that head: First, because *St. Bernard* in many places has largely treated of it: And secondly, because it is a subject most useful, full of all spiritual comfort, and very necessary for you. For according to this two-fold manner of living we all proceed, but how we ought to do, that is a matter we all are ignorant of; which

is very unfortunate, and not a little dangerous, especially to men of religious lives. 207
 The active kind of life then is emblematically expressed in *Method*, which active life itself is divisible into two parts. The first is that by which every one exerts himself chiefly for his own good; correcting, mending, and improving himself in virtues; and next to the advantage of his neighbour, by works of justice, piety, and charity. The second part is that by which a man is led, though for greater merit's sake, to exercise himself chiefly to his neighbour's advantage, in governing, teaching, and forwarding the conversion of souls; as prelates, preachers, and the like do. And between these two parts of active life is the contemplative; and it is disposed in this manner, that every one do exercise himself, first, in prayer, sacred studies, and other good deeds and offices of life, with an intention to correct his own vices and acquire virtues: Secondly, that he rest in contemplation, seeking solitude, and conversation apart with God: And thirdly, that, by both exercises, inspired and enlightened with true wisdom and goodness, and thence become zealous, give himself up to the salvation of others.

According to this method we shall proceed, but how we ought to do, which we shall neglect we shall ignore of. M. M. C. H. A. P.

C H A P. XLV.

Our Lord warneth the Jews that the Church should devolve to the Gentiles, in the parable of the husbandmen, who kill the son of their lord.

OUR Lord, zealous for the salvation of the souls for which he was come to pay down the ransom of life, tried every means to draw them to himself, and to deliver them from the jaws of Sin and Satan. Wherefore sometimes he made use of the gentle insinuating pathetic; and at others of severe and terrifying reproofs: sometimes he recurred to similitudes, sometimes to signs and wonders; now to prophecies, and anon to threats: thus varying the means and manner of cure according to the place and time, and the diversity of persons.

In this place, he reproves the princes and pharisees, with severe language and a terrible example; which, however, was so justly applied, that they took it to themselves. He proposed to them the parable of the husbandmen, who killed their lord's messengers sent to them to demand payment of the fruits due to him. And asking what was the punishment due to such unworthy tenants: Due; (said they) why their lord must destroy

destroy these wretches, and let his vineyard to other husbandmen. *Jesus* therefore, approving their answer, replied to them; The kingdom of God, that is, the Church, shall be taken from among you; and shall be given to another people, who will cultivate it; that is, to the *Gentiles*; of whom we and the whole Church are sprung. To this he added the example of the corner-stone, which signified himself, and was to overthrow *Judaism*. Upon which, finding themselves to be levelled at, instead of reforming, they were but the more exasperated; for their malice quite blinded them.

C H A P. XLVI.

The Jews sought to ensnare our Saviour by his own words.

AS our Lord *Jesus* neglected no means that might conduce to the salvation of the *Jews*, so, on the contrary, the *Jews* omitted none to calumniate and destroy him. They thought therefore to deceive him, but they deceived themselves, with their own devices. They sent to him by premeditated contrivance some of their own disciples, accompanied by the servants of

Herod, to enquire of him, whether or not it was lawful to give tribute to *Cæsar*? For, by this means, they imagined they might bring him under suspicion to *Cæsar* and his friends, or render him at least odious to the *Jews*, as if he could not have answered but against himself. But the all-wise searcher of hearts, seeing into their malice, answered them, that they must give *Cæsar* his own, and to God his due; and told them withal, that they were hypocrites who uttered with fair words a malicious purpose. And thus disappointed of their fraudulent intentions, they returned back with shame.

Here consider attentively our Lord *Jesus*, according to the general method of contemplation I laid down to you; and reflect likewise that *Christ* will not allow us to defraud temporal princes and magistrates of their just right, whether good or bad, believers or unbelievers. Wherefore it is a very great sin to defraud, or refuse payment of the customs and taxes which our temporal superiors think proper to lay on us for the good of the state.

C H A P.
 our Lord: and at the same time reflect on the great efficacy of prayer, attended with faith and perseverance.

C H A P. XLVII.

*The blind man restored to sight at Jericho:
And many other things.*

THE bountiful Lord *Jesus*, who, out of his immense love for us, came down from his divine Father's throne to work our salvation, prepared to set out for *Jerusalem*, to meet his approaching Passion, which he had even at this time foretold to them, but they were too blind in their obstinacy to understand him. When therefore he drew near to *Jericho*, a certain blind man, who sat on the way begging, having intelligence from the populace of his passing by, began to cry out powerfully to him for pity. And though the multitude rebuked him, they could neither dismay or silence him. The Lord *Jesus* therefore, out of regard to his faith and fervor, ordered him to be brought to him, and asked him, "What wilt thou that I do unto thee?" To whom the blind man answered, "Lord, that I see." Which our compassionate Lord granted, saying, "See." And thus saying restored him to sight. Consider here attentively, devout reader, the graciousness of our Lord: and at the same time reflect on the great efficacy of prayer, attended with faith and perseverance. Importunity in prayer,

prayer, you see does not displease God; but is rather agreeable to him. You have already an instance of this in the *Cananean*; and elsewhere, another in the man who obtained the loaves by night, through the importunity of prayer. And thus does the Lord grant to all who importune him, their just and orderly petitions. For it is to every one alike he says; "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" Nay, he often grants even more than is asked, as we shall see in the person of *Zacheus*. Ask then, like the blind man, without blushing. For why should you blush to serve God, to throw off sin, or to ask the graces necessary for either. To be bashful is sometimes a virtue, but may oftentimes be a great fault, as *St. Bernard* observes. There is a shame to sin, and a shame to glory. It is a good shame to blush at the thought of sinning or having sinned. And though no human witness be by, you ought with so much the more modesty to revere the presence of a divine one, as you are truly convinced by how much he surpasses man in purity, and that he is as heinously offended at sin as he is distant from it. Such a kind of shame may boldly bid defiance to reproach, and paves a way to glory, by not admitting sin, or at least by repenting of, and atoning for it, if committed. But should we

be

' be ashamed or grieved to make an ac-
 ' knowledgment of our faults; such a shame
 ' is to sin, and deviates widely from glory.
 ' For the evil which compunction would
 ' fain expel from the heart, this false, this
 ' foolish shame, the binder of all lips, suf-
 ' fers not to be banished from it. O love-
 ' reign kind of victory to yield to the divine
 ' Majesty; and to find no reluctance in sub-
 ' mitting to the authority of his Church!
 ' O strange perversity, not to blush at de-
 ' filing, and yet to blush at cleansing your
 ' feet.' Thus far St. Bernard.

Whatever may occur to your imagination
 concerning this blind man, is alike appli-
 cable to those other two blind men whom
 our Lord enlightened at his going forth from
Jericho, as he did this before his entrance
 into that city. Of the two, see St. *Matthew*,
 chap. xx. and St. *Mark*, chap. x, where the
 name of one of them is mentioned: And
 that upon their crying out, as this poor man
 did, they received the same answer, and
 cure from our Lord.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVII.

Our Lord went into the house of Zacheus.

WHEN our Lord *Jesus*, at his entry into *Jericho*, was passing through the streets, *Zacheus*, the chief of the Publicans, who was informed of his approach, and very desirous to see him, but could not for the throng: at length, being a very little man, he got up into a sycamore tree, that he might at least behold him from thence. *Jesus* therefore, knowing and accepting his faith and desire, says to him, "*Zacheus*, make haste and come down, for I must this day abide in thy house." Who immediately coming down, received him with great joy and reverence, and prepared him a noble repast. Here you see, Christian reader, the gracious courtesy of our blessed Saviour, who grants *Zacheus* so much more than he presumed to hope for, or ask. He sought a sight of him, and *Jesus* gave him himself. Such is the power of prayer! And the desire is such! Nay, it is a loud voice, and an effectual petition. Wherefore says the Psalmist, "The Lord hath granted the desire of the poor, and thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." And at the time when *Moses* was silent with his lips,

lips, and speaking only in his heart, the Lord said to him, "Why do you cry aloud to me?" Exod. xiv. Contemplate here our divine Lord graciously sitting at table with *Zacheus* amidst a company of sinners, and familiarly conversing with them, in order to gain them over to himself. Behold likewise the Disciples, sitting with the same sinners, and conversing with, and encouraging them to good works; knowing it the will of their divine master.

C H A P. XLIX.

Christ gives sight to the man born blind.

WHEN our Lord went to *Jerusalem*, he saw a man that was born blind, whose name was *Calidanius*; and stooping down, he made a paste of earth with his spittle, with which he anointed his eyes, and sent him to the bath *Siloe*, to bathe. The man went, bathed his eyes, and received his sight. This miracle, which was strictly examined into by the *Jews*, turned to their confusion. See the story in the Gospel, where it is very plainly and beautifully related. Behold here our Lord *Jesus*, and contemplate him according to the general

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rules

rules already laid down to you. Here too, consider the great gratitude of the cured man, who courageously and resolutely defends our Lord before the very princes and rulers of the *Jews*, without sparing them in any thing, even before he had the blessing of seeing our Lord. The virtue of gratitude is extremely commendable and pleasing in the sight of God, as its opposite is a detestable vice before him. Of which subject, thus says St. *Bernard*: 'Learn to be thankful for every grace received. Consider diligently the favours heaped upon you, that no gift of God be defrauded of the due return of gratitude and thanksgiving you ought to make, whether the gift be great, middling, or little. Lastly, we are directed to gather the fragments, lest they perish: that is not to suffer the least benefit bestowed upon us, to be forgotten. But does not that perish which is conferred upon the ungrateful? Ingratitude is the soul's worst enemy: it is the destroyer of merit, the disperser of virtues, and the exterminator of all good. Ingratitude is a burning gale, which dries up the very spring of piety, the dew of mercy, and the stream of grace.' Thus St. *Bernard*.

C H A P. I L.

Our Lord's retreat from the Temple to hide himself when the Jews would have stoned him.

WHEN our Lord Jesus was one day preaching in the Temple, and saying, among other things, "If any one keeps my word, he shall never taste death." The Jews answered him, "You are then greater than our father Abraham that died?" To which our Saviour replied, "Before Abraham was made, I am." Which the Jews taking for an impossibility and an untruth, they took stones to stone him. But he hid himself, and retired out of the Temple: for as yet the hour of his Passion was not come. Behold then with concern, how the Lord of All is contemptuously treated by his vile unworthy creatures, and how meekly he gives way to their fury, retreats amidst the crowd, and, with his Disciples, patiently and modestly withdraws from the effects of their rage, like the weakest among them.

was not yet come, he got late out of their hands, and retired to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus had passed, which is distant

The Jews seek another time to stone him.

ANOTHER time, at the Feast of the Dedication, our Lord being in Solomon's porch, was surrounded by these ravenous wolves, who, grinning with their teeth, said, "If thou art *Christ* tell us "openly." To whom the most meek and patient Lamb of God answered humbly, "I tell you so; but you do not believe me." Behold here then this affecting scene. He speaks to them with humble affability; and they, with brutal noise and fury, disturb and molest him: and at length, not able to contain the venom in their breast, take stones to throw at him. Nevertheless, our Lord spoke to them in engaging words, saying, "I have done many good things before you; for which of them is it that you would stone me?" "Because, (say they) you being a man, would make yourself a God." Observe their unaccountable stupidity. They would know whether he is *Christ*, and when he proves it to them by words and actions, they want to stone him, without being able to produce one excuse why they cannot or ought not to believe him to be what he really is. But as his hour

"tick"

was

was not yet come, he got safe out of their hands, and retired to that part of *Jordan* where *John* had baptized, which is distant from *Jerusalem* about eighteen miles. Behold then our Saviour, and consider him and his Disciples under this affliction, and mentally compassionate them with all the tenderness you are master of.

CHAP. LI.

The raising of Lazarus.

THIS miracle is a famous one, very solemn, and worthy to be meditated on with the utmost devotion. Wherefore, endeavour to render yourself as present in mind to all that is here said, as if you had actually been present when it happened; and freely converse, not only with our Lord *Jesus* and his Disciples, but with all this blessed family, so devoted to, and beloved by our Lord; that is, *Lazarus*, *Mary*, and *Martha*. *Lazarus* therefore being dangerously ill, and at the point of death, his sisters, who were very intimate with *Christ*, sent to him to the place whither he had retreated beyond *Jordan*, as aforesaid, saying, "Our brother *Lazarus*, whom you love, is sick."

"sick." They sent him no farther message, either because they thought that sufficient to a friend, and an understanding one; or else because they dared not invite him, knowing that the chiefs of the Jews were laying snares for his life. Our Lord Jesus hearing the news, remained silent for two days; and then, among other things, said to his Disciples, "*Lazarus* is dead; and I rejoyce, for your sakes, that I was not there." Observe the goodness, love, and diligence of our Lord with relation to his Disciples. They returned then, and came near to *Bethany*. *Martha*, as soon as she was informed of it, ran to meet him, and falling at his feet, said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died." Our Lord answered, that he should arise; and thence they began to talk of the Resurrection. Then he sent for *Mary*, whom our Lord had a special love for; who no sooner knew of it, then she arose, and came to him with haste, and falling at his feet, said the same thing. Our Lord, seeing his beloved afflicted and in tears, could not refrain from tears himself; but wept with her. Behold him then with the devout women and his Disciples weeping; and be moved with the tenderness of the affecting scene. After a while, our Lord asked them; "Where have you put him?" Not that he did

did not know; but because as he was talking to human creatures, he spoke to them in a human manner. They answered him, "Lord, come and see." And they led him to the Sepulchre: whither he proceeded between the two devout females, comforting and condoling with them till they were so consoled as almost to forget and drown all sensations of grief in their attention to him. When our Lord arrived at the monument, he commanded the stone to be removed, which *Martha* would have dissuaded him from, saying, that the corps must smell strong, having been four days dead. But our Lord would have the stone removed. Which done, our Lord *Jesus*, lifting up his eyes towards Heaven, said, "I give thee thanks, Father, that thou hast heard me: I knew indeed that you always hear me; but I speak on the account of these, that they may know that thou hast sent me." Behold him then, devout reader, behold him thus praying, and consider his great zeal for the salvation of souls. After this he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Lazarus*, come forth." And he straight came to life, and started forth from the tomb, but tied as he was when buried. But the Disciples untied him, by *Christ's* direction. *Lazarus*, when he was untied, and with him his sisters, knoeled down, and re-
 turned

turned thanks to *Jesus* for so great a benefit; after which, they conducted him home. All who were present were extremely astonished at what they saw, and made it so public, that multitudes, from *Jerusalem* and all parts, came to see *Lazarus*: insomuch, that the princes of the *Jews*, thinking themselves confounded, formed designs against his life.

C H A P. LIII.

Christ's cursing the fig-tree.

THOUGH, according to historical narration, the curse of the fig-tree, and the presenting of the adulterers in the Temple, be thought prior to *Christ's* arrival in *Jerusalem*, yet it seems most proper after that arrival. To employ our meditations wholly on the Passion, and the circumstances relating to it, I have therefore inserted these two facts in this place. As then our Lord *Jesus* was going towards *Jerusalem* he was hungry, and saw a fig-tree very beautifully adorned with branches and foliage. Coming therefore nigh he beheld it more closely, and finding no fruits on it, he cursed it; and it withered to the great surprise

surprize of his Disciples. This was mystically done by our Saviour, who knew it to be a time not proper for such trees to bear. And he did it to signify the curse attending on hypocrites and loquacious persons, who are alike well ornamented trees without fruit.

C H A P. LIV.

The woman caught in adultery.

THE perverse Pharisees and Princes of the Jews were perpetually watching, and studiously contriving how to surprize Christ by their frauds and wiles, and render him odious to the people. But their arrows were turned upon themselves. As therefore a woman had been caught in adultery, and was to be stoned according to the law; they brought her to him into the Temple, to enquire of him what should be done to her: which they did to perplex him, that, if he should direct the law to be fulfilled, they might cast upon him the odious imputation of cruelty and want of mercy: or of injustice, if he should offer to screen her from the law. But our all-wise Saviour, seeing, and willing to avoid the snare, humbly

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stooped

stooped down, and wrote with his finger on the ground; and the gloss tells us, that what he wrote was the sins of the accusers. And this writing was of such efficacy, that every one was able to read his own sins there. So that when our Lord raised himself again, and said to them, "Let him among ye who is without sin, throw the first stone," they departed, astonished and confounded. Tho' *Christ*, when he had pronounced the sentence, was gracious enough to stoop again, for the sake of his envious adversaries, to save them from confusion. And thus did their craft evaporate and come to nothing. After her accusers were gone, our Lord admonished the woman, and dismissed her. Contemplate then our divine Redeemer in all these circumstances, according to the rule I have prescribed to you in the beginning of this work.

C H A P. LV.

*The conspiracy of the Jews against Christ:
and his flight into the city of Ephraim.*

THE time approaching when our Lord Jesus designed to work our redemption by the effusion of his precious blood, the

the Devil armed his ministers, and sharpened the malice of their hearts against him, even to death; and the good works of our Lord, especially the raising of *Lazarus*, but incensed them the more to envy and rage. Whence, able no longer to contain their fury, the High Priest and Pharisees held a council in which *Caiphas* prophecying, they deliberated to kill the most innocent Lamb of God. O wicked council! O reprobate guides of the people, and evil counsellors! Wretches, what are you doing? To what excess does your frenzy transport you! What a sentence is this! Where is the occasion for your murdering the Lord your God? Is he not in the midst of you, though you know him not, searching your reins and hearts? But thus it is expedient that it should be done as ye have desired. His heavenly Father has delivered him up into your hands, by you he is to be put to death, but, alas, his death shall not prove expedient to you. He indeed shall die and rise again to save his people, but you shall perish from among his people.

This resolution of the council was made public, and our Lord was acquainted with it, but his wisdom willing to give way to their wrath, especially as every thing was not compleatly fulfilled concerning him, he went to that side of the country nigh the

Desert, to the city of *Ephraim*. Thus flies the humble Lord of the highest Heavens before the face of his most vile and abject servants. Contemplate here our Lord *Jesus Christ* and his Disciples under the repeated affliction of a painful and necessitous flight. Meditate likewise how our blessed Lady his immaculate mother, and her sisters remained with the *Magdalen*, whom our Lord, before his departure, consoles with the promise of his speedy return.

C H A P. LVI.

Our Lord's return to Bethania, where Mary Magdalen anoints his feet.

AS we have seen above that our Lord *Jesus* for our instruction used prudence in retreating from danger, to shew us, that according to exigence of time and place, we ought to decline, with all lawful caution, the fury of persecutors: so now he makes use of fortitude, returning of his own accord, when the due time approaches, that he may meet his Passion, and deliver himself up into the hands of his persecutors. And as before he made use of temperance, when he declined the multitude who sought to make

make him king; now he exerts his justice, when he prepares to demand the honours of a king, and that the people strew branches of palm and olive before him. Though how modestly does he receive this honour, sitting humbly on an ass! Our divine Master made use here particularly of those four virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, for our instruction. They are called cardinal virtues, that is, principal virtues, because from them all other moral virtues flow.

Our Lord then, on the Sabbath-day before his triumph of palms, returned to *Bethania*, about two miles from *Jerusalem*, where a supper was prepared for him at the house of *Simon* the leper, where were present *Lazarus*, *Martha*, and *Mary*. It was at that time *Mary* poured on the head of *Jesus* a pound of precious ointment, and anointed his head and feet. And what she once did in the same house out of contrition, she now repeats out of devotion: for she loved him above all things, and could never be satiated with honouring him.

But the traitor *Judas* thought much of this, and murmured at it; when our Saviour answered for her, and defended her vigorously. Nevertheless, the traitor remained so greatly offended at it, that he from thence took occasion to betray him; and on the Wednesday following, sold him for thirty pieces

pieces of silver. Behold our divine Saviour then here supping with his friends, and conversing with them for the few remaining days, till his Passion; but chiefly in the house of *Lazarus* and his sisters, for that was his usual refuge: There he eat by day, and there he reposed by night, with his Disciples. There likewise our blessed Lady, with his sisters, reposed; whom this devout family, and chiefly *Magdalen*, honoured, revered, and attended with constancy and affection. Behold then this immaculate Virgin-Mother, struck with excess of fear for her dearly beloved Son, from whom she was never apart any more than was absolutely necessary. When our Lord, in defending the *Magdalen* from the traitor's murmurings, said, 'Pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it for my funeral:' Think you not that these words like a dagger pierced the soul of the blessed Mother? For what could he say more express to foretell his death? So all were struck with fear, and full of anxious disturbing thoughts; talking to each other like persons in the utmost confusion and terror; none knew what advice to give, or what to take; and all were in the utmost terrors whenever he went to *Jerusalem*, which however he did every day: For from this Saturday to the day of his Last Supper, he said many things to the *Jews*,
and

pieces of silver. Behold our divine Saviour
 then here supping with his friends, and con-
 versing with them for the few remaining
 days, till his Passion; but chiefly in the
 house of Lazarus and his sisters, for that
 was his usual refuge: There he sat by day,
 and there he rested by night, with his dis-
 ciples. There likewise our blessed Lady, with
 his sisters, rested: whom this devout la-
 dily, and chiefly Mary Magdalene, honoured, re-
 verenced, and attended with company and
 affection. Behold then this remarkable Vir-
 gin-Mother, struck with excess of love for
 her dearly beloved Son, in whom she was
 never apart, and now was absolutely
 necessary. When one, in describing
 the passion from the women's mourning,
 said, "Pouring this ornament on my body,
 she has done it for my funeral." Think
 you not that these words like a dagger
 pierced the soul of the blessed Mother? For
 what could be any more exactly so foretold
 his death? So all were struck with fear, and
 full of anxious disturbing thoughts, talking
 to each other like persons in the utmost con-
 fusion and terror; none knew what advice
 to give, or what to take; and all were in the
 utmost terror, whenever he went to Jerusa-
 lem, which however he did every day: For
 from this Saturday to the day of his last
 supper, he said many things to the Jews.



ESUS CHRISTI



Jesus Entering Jerusalem

and without
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and wrought wonders openly in *Jerusalem*, all which I intend to pass in silence, except his riding on the ass, least our meditation be interrupted; for we are now on the verge of his Passion.

See then, devout reader, that you summon all your recollection, that nothing may distract or divert you from the solemn mysteries which precede or attend his Passion. But be watchful and attentive to the whole and every circumstance of it, to reap the benefit he designs you by it.

C H A P. LVII.

Our Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem, on Palm-Sunday, riding upon an ass.

MYSTERIES were daily wrought, and the Scriptures fulfilled, by our Lord *Jesus*; and the time drawing nigh, he was desirous of redeeming mankind through the bitter Passion of his sacred humanity. Wherefore, on the next Sunday, very early in the morning, he prepared to go to *Jerusalem*, in a manner he had never gone before, that he might fulfill the words of the Prophet which were written to that purpose.

When

When his blessed Mother found that he was resolved to depart, she endeavoured earnestly to persuade him from it, and with tender affection said, 'My beloved Son whither will you go? Why will you go among those whom you know conspire against you, and seek to kill you? I beseech you therefore not to go among them.' And his Disciples and *Mary Magdalen*, in the same manner entreated him, and beseeched him to stay: 'Go not among them, O Lord, (say they) we pray you; since you know they seek your death, and if you throw yourself into their hands this day, they will secure you, and execute their wicked purpose.' O how sincerely did they love him, and how sensibly were they affected at the apprehension of every thing that might hurt him! But he who thirsted after the salvation of man, had disposed it otherwise, wherefore he said, 'It is the will of my Father that I go, come ye also, fear not, for he will protect us, and this night we shall return hither without hurt.' And immediately he set out for his journey, and that small, but faithful company, followed him.

When he came to a certain place in the way, which was called *Bethphage*, he sent two of his Disciples to the city of *Jerusalem*,
and

and bid them fetch him an ass and her foal, that were tied in the highway, for the use of such poor people who had no beasts of their own. When they were brought, the Disciples laid their cloaths upon them, and our Saviour meekly set himself upon the ass, and riding in that humble manner, came into the city of *Jerusalem*. Consider him here attentively, and behold how in this; he reproves the pomp and glory of worldly vanity. The beast he rid on was not decked with rich furniture; but, instead of golden trappings, wrought saddles, and curious bridles, all the ornament consisted in poor cloaths, hempen cords and haltars, though he was "the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." Now when the people heard of his coming, through the fame of raising *Lazarus* from the dead, they went out to meet him, and received him as a King, with joyful hymns and songs; and shewing great tokens of gladness for his coming, they strew the ways with boughs and branches of the trees, and spread their cloaths under his ass's feet as he passed.

But notwithstanding this, he mingled tears with their joy; for when he beheld the city, he wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known, &c."

It is manifest in Scripture, that our Lord *Jesus* wept three different times: Once at

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the

the death of *Eazarus*, to shew the wretched state of mankind, who incurred the pain of death through the offence of their first parents. Secondly, he wept on this day, for the blindness and ignorance of men, and namely for the people of *Jerusalem*, who would not know the time of their glorious Visitation. Thirdly, he wept in his Passion, in beholding the malice and perversity of man's heart, and considering that his Passion being sufficient for the redemption of all the world, yet many would not partake of it. Concerning this last weeping, St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, says thus, speaking of the time of his Passion; "Who with a strong cry, --- and tears ~~were~~^{was} heard for his reverence." Heb. v. We are taught then from sacred text that *Christ* wept these three times. But the holy Church relates that he wept a fourth time; that is, in his tender infancy, and therefore she sings: "The tender infant, as he lies in the cold manger, shakes and cries." This he did to conceal from the Devil the mystery of ^{his} incarnation. Now our Lord *Jesus* weeping on this day so abundantly over *Jerusalem*, and with so sorrowful a heart, both for the eternal damnation, and also for the temporal destruction and ruin of that city, his holy Mother, with all the Apostles, could not contain themselves from weeping.

Thus

Thus rideth our Lord upon that humble beast, having, instead of princes, nobles, and barons, his poor Disciples about him, together with his Mother and some other devout women, who both with fear and reverence, devoutly followed him. He entered the city in triumph, being honoured by all the people, whose shouts and acclamations put the whole city in great commotion. Our Lord went first into the Temple, and a second time cast out the buyers and sellers. He stood there openly in the Temple, preaching and answering the questions of the Scribes and Pharisees all the day, till it drew towards night. But notwithstanding the great honour which before they had done him, yet they permitted him and his Disciples to remain the whole day fasting, there being none among them that invited him to eat or drink. And when night was come, he went with his Disciples to his homely lodging at *Bethany*, departing privately from the city with his small company, who, in the morning, had entered publicly with so great honour. Hence may we learn how little regard is to be had to worldly honour, which lasteth so short a time, and so flightly vanissheth away.

CHAP. LVIII.

*What our Lord Jesus did from Palm-Sunday
to the Thursday following.*

OUR Lord Jesus, the fountain of all charity, desirous to express both in word and deed his perfect charity he bore as well to his enemies as to his friends, to the end that no man should be lost, but all might be saved, when it drew now towards the end of his life, and the time of his Passion was near at hand, he laboured diligently both in teaching and preaching the gospel continually to the people; especially on those three days, that is, on Palm-Sunday, and on the Monday and Tuesday following: On which days he came very early in the morning into the Temple, and preached unto, and taught the people, and disputed with the Scribes and Pharisees, answering their subtle questions by which they sought to ensnare him: in this manner was he busied for those three days from morning till night.

But as it would be too long to treat in particular of all that passed during that time between our blessed Saviour and the Jews, it being also foreign to the Passion, which we are now to speak of; therefore, passing over all the examples and parables he

he made use of to reprove and convince them, we will specially consider how the chief Priests and Pharisees, perceiving the people to be well disposed towards him, and fearing to execute their malice against him openly, privately and subtly conspired together how they might take him in his words, and accuse him of saying something against their law, or against paying the tribute to *Cæsar*, and thence condemn him as worthy of death. But our Lord, to whom the secrets of all mens hearts are open, knowing their treachery and malice, answered them so wisely, that they were disappointed in their purpose; and were so much confounded, that they durst not ask him any more questions. And then he severely reprov'd the pride, the hypocrisy, the covetousness, and many other wicked practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, saying to them in these words: "Woe be to you Scribes and Pharisees who love and seek after worldly glory." Thus he proceeded, many ways rebuking their evil lives and wickedness: Yet nevertheless he commanded the people to hear and fulfil their doctrine, but not to follow their wicked example. At length he repeated their great ingratitude and unkindness towards him, and especially that of the city of *Jerusalem*, inasmuch as he was often desirous to have gathered

gathered them under his wings, even as a hen doth her chickens, but they would not, when he told them of their destruction both temporal and eternal; and thus he left them, and went out of the Temple, and with his Disciples, and many others of the Jews that believed in him, went to Mount Olivet, where he taught them how to prepare for their latter end; and farther told them of the Day of Judgment, in which the good should be placed at the right-hand of God in everlasting life, and the wicked on the left-hand in perpetual misery and torment.

Thus ended our Lord his public preaching to the Jews on the Tuesday night before his Passion; after which he said to his Disciples in private, "Know ye, that after two days, the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners to be crucified." Oh what a sorrowful speech was this to all his faithful followers! But the false traitor Judas was glad to hear it; consulting within his heart, by the instigation of the Devil, who had entered into him, how or in what manner, by his death, he might satisfy his covetousness. For which purpose he slept not that night, but early on the morrow, which was Wednesday morning, when the chief Priests and Scribes were assembled together in the house of Caiphas, Judas went to them, and offered, for a reward, to deliver

liver

liver him unto them. Wherefore they being glad of the offer, appointed him thirty pence. And thus was the death of our Redeemer effected through covetousness, treachery, and malice. Hence had that wicked traitor the price of the ointment which before he had murmured at as lost, and from that time he sought an opportunity how he might betray him.

This was the wicked practice of cursed *Judas* and the *Jews* on the Wednesday following. But what may we imagine did our Lord *Jesus* and his blessed company? He went not into *Jerusalem*, nor appeared publicly among the *Jews* that day, but spent his whole time in prayer, and armed himself for the redemption of mankind which he came to accomplish; praying not only for his friends that believed in him and loved him, but also for his professed enemies; fulfilling now in himself the holy perfection of charity, which before he had taught his Disciples, in bidding them to pray for their enemies, and for those that should persecute and hate them.

Our Lord *Jesus*, knowing the malice of *Judas*, his wicked traitor, and also how the *Jews* were bent against him, prayed to his heavenly Father for them. And as it was the last day that he was to dwell and converse so familiarly with his holy Mother and
his

his Apostles, he comforted them with his holy word, as he was wont to do; but he did it the more especially now, to strengthen them against the great sorrows they were to suffer at his Passion. And he comforted his blessed Mother and St. *Mary Magdalen* in a more particular manner, who continually thirsted to drink in the fountain of his holy grace, of which may he, of his infinite bounty and love, make us all partakers. *Amen.*

CHAP. LIX.

Our Lord's Supper the night before his Passion; and of many circumstances belonging to it.

WHEN the time was come in which our Lord *Jesus* had disposed all things for the working the salvation of his people, and redeeming them, not with corruptible gold or silver, but with his most precious blood: before he departed, by death, from his Apostles, he would first make them a memorable supper which might serve them for a future token, and might fulfil those mysteries which till then had not been fulfilled.

This



THE LAST SUPPER

This supper was truly magnificent, and the things very wonderful and great which our Lord Jesus wrought there for you. Concerning which, four things chiefly occur which are most worthy your devout meditation. First, the supper itself. Secondly, his washing the feet of his Disciples. Thirdly, the institution of the sacrament of his blessed body and blood. And fourthly, the communion of a beautiful sermon by our Lord Jesus. All which we will treat of in their proper order.

First then consider that Peter and John were sent by our Lord Jesus to a certain friend on Mount Zion, where there was a large room, to prepare the supper. Our Lord himself with the rest of his Disciples entered the city on Thursday when the day was almost spent, and repaired to the same place. Behold him then, your reader, standing amidst his Apostles, and discoursing on heavenly subjects, while in the mean time, the supper was preparing by some of the twelve Disciples. When all things were ready, the beloved St. John, who was most familiar with our Lord, and who was diligent in seeing that things should be in order, came to him and said, 'Lord, when it pleaseth you, to sup, all things are ready.' Wherefore our blessed Saviour with his twelve Apostles went up; and John went always next to him.



This supper was truly magnificent, and the things very wonderful and great which our Lord *Jesus* wrought there for you. Concerning which, four things chiefly occur which are most worthy your devout meditation. First, the supper itself. Secondly, his washing the feet of his Disciples. Thirdly, the institution of the sacrament of his blessed body and blood. And fourthly, the composition of a beautiful sermon by our Lord *Jesus*. All which we will treat of in their proper order.

First then consider, how *Peter* and *John* were sent by our Lord, to a certain friend on *Mount Sion*, where there was a large room, to prepare the *Pasche*. Our Lord himself with the rest of his Disciples entered the city on Thursday when the day was almost spent, and repaired to the same place. Behold him then, pious reader, standing amidst his Apostles, and discoursing on heavenly subjects, while, in the mean time, the *Pasche* was preparing by some of the seventy-two Disciples. When all things were ready, the beloved St. *John*, who was most familiar with our Lord, and who was diligent in seeing that things should be in order, came to him and said, 'Lord, when it pleaseth you
' to sup, all things are ready.' Wherefore our blessed Saviour with his twelve Apostles went up; and *John* went always next to

him, for there was none who loved him more truly, or that was more beloved by him again; for when he was taken, he followed him when the rest fled, and was present at his death and Passion, and after his death he departed not from him till he saw him buried; therefore, at this supper, he sat nearest to him, although he was younger than any of the rest.

When our Lord *Jesus* with his twelve Apostles came to the table, he first devoutly gave thanks, then the *Paschal Lamb* being brought, he blessed it, and they all sat down, and *John* next to *Jesus*. The table was a board on the ground, being four-square, and made of divers boards joined together, and as they say, who have seen the same at *Rome*, in the church of *St. John Lateran*, it has a square at each corner sufficient to contain three people, one at each right-angle, the fourth being one with the main square of the table, so that the Disciples sitting at each square, and our Lord among them, they might reach into the main square in the midst of them, and all eat out of one dish, as appeareth when he said, "He that putteth his hand in the dish with me, he it is that shall betray me." Thus far may we imagine of their first sitting down to the board. But we must farther observe, that when they began to eat of the *Paschal Lamb*, they

they all arose and stood upright, holding their staves in their hands, according to the law of *Moses*, which our Lord *Jesus* came to accomplish. Nevertheless, though they stood then, yet they afterwards sat down again, as the gospel tells us, otherwise St. *John* could not have rested his head upon our Saviour's breast, as the scripture saith he did.

When the *Paschal Lamb* was brought to the table, being roasted according to the law of *Moses*, our Lord *Jesus*, who was the true Lamb of God without any blemish of sin, sitting among them as he that chiefly ministered and served the rest, took the lamb into his blessed hands, divided it, and gave it to his Disciples, and bid them eat joyfully. But though they eat as he had bid them; yet they could not be very chearful, being awed by a dread, lest any thing should farther happen to their divine master contrary to their expectation. And as they were eating, he began openly to relate to them the sorrowful subject of his Passion, which was then to come to pass: and among other things, he said, "I have desired to eat this *Paschal Lamb* with you before I suffer;" Luke xxii. "For verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." Matth. xxvi. These words of our blessed Lord reached the bowels of the Apostles, and like

a sharp-pointed sword pierced their hearts : wherefore they left off eating, and looking with sorrow upon each other, at length, after a while, they said, " Lord, is it I ? " Here we have a subject of great compassion, both in regard to our blessed Lord, and his holy Disciples, who were doubtless filled with all possible grief and affliction. But *Judas*, the traitor, continued still eating, as if the word *betray* seemed in no manner to appertain to him. *St. John* however, at the importunities of *St. Peter*, asked him, saying, " Lord, who is it shall betray thee ? " And our Lord privately revealed it to him, as to his singularly beloved and most familiar Disciples. *St. John*, being much astonished, was inwardly pierced to the heart with grief; and turning himself towards *Jesus*, he laid his head upon his sacred breast. Here behold the great benignity of our Lord *Jesus* who thus familiarly permits his beloved Disciple *St. John* to recline and rest himself on his breast. Oh how tenderly did they love each other ! This was a sweet place of rest to *St. John*, and most profitable to all Christians ! Consider likewise how the other Disciples sit sorrowful, and eat not, being troubled with inward grief at the words he had spoke to them, that is, that he should be betrayed by one of their company, wherefore they looked

sorrowful

sorrowful on each other, as not knowing what remedy to apply to bring them comfort in this case. And thus much may suffice at present for the first point in relation to this corporal supper, and consummation of the law by eating the Paschal Lamb.

Touching the second point, which is the washing of the Disciples feet, you are to know that after the supper was over, our Lord *Jesus* rose up from the table, and his Disciples with him, not knowing what he was then to do, or whether he was going. He went down with them however into another room, beneath that in which they had supped, as they relate who have seen the place; there he bid them sit down, and calling for water, stripped himself of his clothes, and having bound himself round with a linnen cloth, he poured water into a stone basin, and set it before St. *Peter's* feet, and then he kneeled down to wash them. *Peter*, being greatly astonished at what his Lord was going to do, absolutely declined, and refused him. But when he heard the threats of our Lord, and that he should have no part in his glory if he permitted him not to do it, he humbly consented and submitted to his divine pleasure.

Here now, pious reader, let us devoutly consider the humble works of our Lord *Jesus*, and be diligently attentive to all that follows,

follows, it being a subject of great wonder and speculation: For what a sight was it to behold the King of Heaven and the Lord of all Majesty humbly stooping himself to, and kneeling down at the feet of poor fishermen who were sitting; to behold him washing their feet, wiping them with a towel, and devoutly kissing them! And what much more exalts his humility is to behold him performing this mean office to *Judas*, the traitor who was to betray and sell him. Oh perverse and wicked wretch! Oh hard and cruel heart; more hardened than the stone, and more impenetrable than the diamond; which is neither moved at so great humility, nor melteth or becomes soft with the heat of so great charity; and who trembleth not with fear at the presence of so high a Majesty on his knees before thee, but, on the contrary, you persist still in your wicked design of betraying and seeking the destruction of him who is innocence itself, and whose bounty and ineffable goodness you experience even to the last. But woe to thee, Oh wretch! thou still remaining inflexible, wilt infallibly bring forth what thou hast most execrably conceived, and in the end, not he, but thou shalt perish! It is undoubtedly a subject of great surprize, to consider the ineffable bounty and meekness of

of our Lord *Jesus*, and to see the notorious obstinacy and malice of the wicked traitor *Judas*.

When this ceremony was ended, he again returned to the same place where he had supped; where, all being seated as before, he began to exhort them all to imitate the example he had given them. Wherefore we may here contemplate how our Lord *Jesus Christ* left us this night of his Passion an example of five sublime virtues: that is, of humility, as we have seen in his washing of his Disciples feet; of charity, in the institution of the adorable sacrament of his body and blood, and in the sermon he then made, which is full of charitable admonitions; of patience, in bearing with his wicked traitor, and suffering many reproaches when he was taken and led as a thief to judgment; of obedience, in going to suffer, and meeting an approbrious death to fulfil the will of his Father; and of prayer, by praying three different times in the garden of *Gethsemany*.

Let us then endeavour to imitate him in these virtues; and hence proceed to a consideration of the third point, that is, of the institution of the most adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. And in relation to this, we cannot but with astonishment behold that most beloved condescension and sublime

lime charity with which he vouchsafed to give himself to us; ordaining that sacrament as a means whereby he might leave us that divine and heavenly food of his sacred body and blood. Wherefore, after he had washed his Disciples feet, to shew them the ending of the sacrifices of the Old Law, and the beginning of the New Testament, and to make himself our only true sacrifice, he took bread into his blessed hands, and lifting up his eyes to his heavenly Father, he blessed it, and instituted the sacrament of his body, and giving it to his Disciples, said, "Take and eat, for this is my body which shall be delivered for you." And in the same manner he took the chalice, and said, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood which shall be shed for you, and for many in the remission of sins."

Here, Christian reader, attentively consider how devoutly, how diligently, and how truly our blessed Lord *Jesus* changed the substance of the bread into his precious body, and afterwards, with his own blessed hands, distributed it himself to that beloved and holy company, enjoining them to keep it as a memorial of his love, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." This is that sweet and precious memorial which renders man's soul most grateful and pleasing to God, as often as it is worthily received;

ceived; and therefore the consideration of this most excellent gift of love ought to inflame our souls with love, and wholly transform us into the giver. For what could he have given us more dear, more sweet, and more precious than himself? He whom we receive in the sacrament of the altar, is the self-same Son of God *Christ Jesus*, that took flesh and blood, and was born of the Virgin *Mary*, and suffered death on the cross for us, rose the third day from death to life, ascended up into Heaven, sitteth at the right-hand of the Father, and shall come again at the last day to judge both the living and the dead, in whose power is both life and death, who made both Heaven and Hell, and finally, who can either reward us with the joys of the one, or punish us with the eternal pains of the other. He, the self-same God and Man is contained in that small host in the form of bread, which is daily offered to God the Father. He is our Lord *Jesus Christ*, Son of the eternal and living God. Touching the fourth and last point to be considered, let us now behold how this sovereign Master, after this institution, made to his Disciples a most beautiful sermon, full of heavenly sweetness, and of divine love and charity. For having given to them that blessed sacrament, and amongst

the rest, also to the wicked traitor *Judas*, he said to him, "That which thou doest, do it quickly." John xiii. And immediately that cursed traitor went to the chief Priests, to whom he had sold him on the Wednesday before, and asked them for help to apprehend and take him.

In the mean time he made the said sermon, which he preached to his Disciples, giving them his *peace*, and chiefly recommended to them three principal virtues above all others; that is, *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*. Which charity he exprest in these words, saying, "I give you a new commandment, which is, that you love one another; for by this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples if ye love one another." And again: "If you love me and keep my commandments; and whosoever loveth me, and keepeth my sayings, then shall my Father love him, and we will come to him and dwell with him." And in many other places he particularly recommended to them this charity, as a worthy legacy which he would now bequeath to them in this his last will and testament.

Secondly, he established them in faith, and confirmed them more strongly in the belief of his divinity, saying: "Let not your hearts

“ hearts be troubled, and fear ye not, as
 “ ye have believed in God, so believe in
 “ me also.” Farther shewing them that the
 Father and he is one; and that though as
 Man he was less than his Father, yet he was
 equal with him as he was God; and there-
 fore he reprehended *Philip*, who asked him
 to shew them the Father, saying, ‘ that he
 ‘ who saw him, saw the Father.’ And in
 the conclusion of this point, he said, ‘ If
 ‘ ye believe not that I am in the Father, and
 ‘ the Father in me, yet at least believe me
 ‘ for the works that ye have seen me do,
 ‘ because no other could do the works which
 ‘ I have done.’

Thirdly, he comforted them in hope many
 ways. And first, as to the effects of prayer,
 he said, “ If ye abide in me, and my words
 “ abide in you, whatever ye ask, it shall be
 “ given you.” Again, he armed them in
 regard to all manner of tribulations, and
 the contempt of the world, saying, ‘ If the
 ‘ world hate ye, you know that it hated
 ‘ me before you.’ Thus comforting their
 hope with patience, in time of persecution,
 by his own example, who was their Lord
 and Master.

Lastly, he fortified them, lest they should
 despair by reason of his leaving them, telling
 them that they should conceive great sorrow

for his absence for a short time, in regard to the death he was to suffer; but that afterwards that sorrow should be changed into unspeakable joy, by means of his glorious resurrection from death, and his ascension to his Father, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, whom he would send to comfort them in all their afflictions, and teach them all truth. And he concluded with these words, saying, 'All this I have spoken to you, that ye might have peace in me, in the world you shall suffer much sorrow and affliction, but be of good heart; for I have overcome the world;' Which was the same as to say, 'and so shall ye through my grace.'

After this our Lord Jesus, lifting up his eyes towards Heaven, and addressing himself to his Father, said, 'Father, keep them whom thou hast given me. When I was with them I kept them. But now I come to thee: Holy Father, for them do I pray: not for the world, and not for them only do I pray, but for them also that by their word shall believe in me. Father, whom thou hast given me, I will, that where I am, they also may be with me, that they may see my glory.' These, with many other things most moving and piercing, he spoke in presence of his Disciples. And

it is certainly surprizing to imagine how they, who loved him so tenderly, could possibly bear to hear them without melting with grief and sorrow. And doubtless whoever hath grace deeply to examine and dwell by devout meditation upon the sweet doctrine of our blessed Lord and Saviour, cannot but be inwardly kindled with his divine love in beholding so great charity, benignity, goodness, and other things he was pleased to shew, this night of his sacred Passion. Consider him while he speaks, behold in how affable, devout, and effectual a manner he imprints on the hearts of his Disciples all he relates to them, and in some measure feeds their souls with the pleasing aspect of his divine countenance. Consider likewise the Disciples, how sorrowful they stand to hear him, hanging down their heads, fetching deep sighs, and bitterly weeping; being brimful of extreme sorrow and affliction, as *Christ* himself bears witness, saying, "Because I have spoke these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts." And among the rest consider St. *John*, who above all the rest was most familiar with our blessed Lord, how attentively he beholds his beloved Master, and with a most tender anxiousness takes particular notice of every word he says.

At

At length, among other things which he spoke to them, he said, "Arise, let us go hence." Oh what fear may we well imagine did then seize their hearts; not knowing as yet whither, or in what manner he would go; suspecting greatly that the time was now come, in which they were to be separated from him. They arose however, and followed him; each striving which should be nearest to him, and all flocking round him as the chickens round the hen; they crouded in upon him; first one, and then another, through the earnest desire they had of being near him, and hearing his divine doctrine: all which he, with great patience and benignity, suffered them to do. At last, having ended what he had to say to them, he brought them into a garden on the other side of the river Cedron, and there fixing himself in prayer, he waited for Judas the traitor, and the rest that were to apprehend him; as we shall see in that which follows of his Passion.

C H A P. LIX.

*The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; and
his prayer in the garden.*

IT is now time for us to enter upon the subject of the Passion of our Lord Jesus! But whoever desires glory in the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ, must devoutly apply himself to the pious and frequent meditation of it; the mysteries of which, as well as every other thing that was done belating to it, if they were truly considered with all the attention of the mind, would undoubtedly transform each votary into a new man. Wherefore, pious reader, banishing from your heart all the vain and troublesome cares of this life, and all sorts of wandering and distracting thoughts which may hinder your attention, and disturb the tranquillity of your soul, endeavour, as far as possible, to render yourself attentive, as if present at the dismal tragedy of this sorrowful and bitter Passion.

And first then, behold (as is before mentioned) how our Lord Jesus went over the river *Cedron* into a garden, whither he was often used to resort with his Disciples to pray. He took with him three of his most beloved

beloved Disciples, *Peter, James, and John*, and telling them that his heart was heavy and sorrowful even unto death, he bid them watch with him in prayer. And then going about a stone's cast from them, and throwing himself on his knees, he made his devout and humble prayer to his Father. We read that he often prayed thus: but he then prayed for us, as our advocate; but now he prayed for himself. Have compassion on him, and admire his most profound humility. Who being God co-eternal and co-equal with his Father, forgets as it were his being so, and prays like man, humbly offering up petitions to his Father, thus truly expressing his most perfect and submissive obedience to him. But what does he pray for? He prays to his heavenly Father, to take from him, if possible, the bitter chalice of his approaching Passion, and that he might not die that cruel death of the cross, if it could any ways be agreeable to his divine will. But his prayer was not heard in this; since his Father would have him to die, and would not spare him though his true and only Son; but thus delivers him up for us all. "For so God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." John iii. Our Lord *Jesus* therefore submitted to this obedience, and faithfully

fully fulfilled the divine will of his Father.
 Consider likewise the unpeakable charity
 both of the Father and the Son towards us.
 It was for us that this death was inflicted
 upon him; and he suffered it through the
 excess of love he bore us. Wherefore our
 blessed Lord prays still to his heavenly Fa-
 ther, saying, Most merciful and gracious
 Father, full of pity and compassion: I be-
 seech thee to hear my prayer, and despise
 not my supplication: Attend unto me and
 hear me. I am sorrowful in my affliction;
 my soul is vexed within me, and my
 heart is troubled. Incline thine ear to-
 wards me, and hearken to the voice of my
 supplication. It pleased thee, O heavenly
 Father, to send me into this world to fasti-
 tiously for the sin of man committed against
 us; and presently I was ready to thy com-
 mand, and said; Lo, I go. And I have
 farther declared thy word and truth to
 them, dwelling among them, in many
 troubles; from my youth, fulfilling thy
 will in all thou hast commanded me, and
 am also ready to accomplish to the utmost
 those things which are to be done for
 their redemption. Yet thou seest, O most
 beloved Father, how maliciously my ene-
 mies have conspired against me; I have
 ever done them good, and bestowed bene-

fits on those that hated me; and they have again rewarded me with evil for good, and returned me hatred for love; and at this present time they have corrupted my Disciple, who hath sold me to them for thirty pence, and made him be the instrument to destroy me. Oh Father, if it be thy will, take from me, I beseech thee, this bitter Cup of my Passion: but if not, thy blessed will be done. If they will not acknowledge me for thy only Son, yet, as I have ever lived a righteous and innocent life, and wrought so many good works amongst them, they ought not to be so cruel and maliciously bent against me. Remember, oh heavenly Father, that I have always stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. And shall good be recompensed with evil? For they have digged a pit for my soul, and prepared a most shameful death for me. Wherefore thou, O Lord, who seeest all things, be not silent, forsake me not, but rise up to help me; for great tribulation is near at hand, and there is no other that can deliver me. My adversaries are all before thee that seek my soul: And my heart hath expected reproach, and I am full of heaviness.

This

This done, our Lord *Jesus* came again to his Disciples, and finding them heavy with sleep, he awakened them, and bid them to watch and pray; which he did a second and third time; and then returning again to his prayers, he said as before, and added, saying, 'Oh, most righteous Father, if it be
' so that thou hast absolutely ordained that
' I must suffer a most cruel death on the cross
' for man's redemption, thy most holy will
' be done. But first I recommend to thy
' care, my beloved Mother, and my Disci-
' ples, which hitherto I have always taken
' care of.' And while he was fervent in his holy prayer, his most precious blood gushed forth like sweat, from all parts of his sacred body, and ran down abundantly upon the ground, through the extreme violence of his bitter agony. Here is a great subject of grief and sorrow, which ought to be sufficient to move the hardest heart to compassion at the extreme anguish and pain which our blessed Lord *Jesus* suffered at that time for our sake. For by virtue of his divinity he foresaw all the pains and torments which were to be inflicted upon him, and therefore, according to his humanity, his tender body trembled with fear, and fell into a most violent and bloody sweat. But hence let us learn to check our frequent impa-

tience from this, that our Lord prayed three times to his Father before he received any answer.

Now at the third time, when he was in the profoundest anguish of spirit, behold an Angel from God, the Prince of the celestial Hierarchy, *St. Michael*, came down and stood before him, comforted him, and said, Hail, O blessed Lord *Jesus*! your devout prayer and bloody sweat I have offered up to thy Father in the presence of the whole Court of Heaven, and we all, humbly prostrate before him, have besought him to take from thee that bitter draught of thy Passion: but thy heavenly Father answering us, said, "My blessed Son knows full well that the redemption of mankind, which, out of our sovereign love to him, we so much desire, cannot be conveniently fulfilled without the shedding of his blood; wherefore if he is desirous of their salvation, he must die for them." To whom our Lord *Jesus* again replied, "I desire above all things the salvation of man's soul, and therefore I chuse rather cheerfully to suffer death, by which the souls which my heavenly Father hath made to his own image and likeness, may be saved, than not to die, and that those souls should not be redeemed: Wherefore
my

'my Father's will be done.' The Angel then again replying, said, 'Be now of good heart, my Lord, and act courageously; for it behoves the High to work great things, and to suffer manfully most severe and difficult trials: thy pains and troubles shall soon pass away, and joy and glory shall ever after succeed. And thy heavenly Father is, and will be always with you; and will keep and preserve from harm, thy blessed Mother and thy Disciples, according to thy desire.'

Our most humble Lord *Jesus* rose up, and meekly accepted this small comfort from the Angel, the Creator from the creature, reputing himself for that time even inferior to them. Wherefore, he was sorrowful as man, was comforted by the Angel as man, took his leave of him as man, and as man prayed him to recommend him to his Father, and to the whole Court of celestial Spirits. And thus a third time he riseth from prayer, with his body covered with blood; whom thou mayest behold, with inward compassion, wiping himself or bathing in the river; all which is devoutly to be considered with sorrow and compassion, since it could not possibly be endured without great bitterness and pain.

Here

Here we must observe, that many of the Fathers and learned Doctors say, that our Lord *Jesus* prayed in this manner, not merely for fear of his bitter Passion, but chiefly through the pity and mercy which he had towards his chosen people the *Jews*, lamenting that they would be lost by not believing in him, and putting him to death. For surely it was most ungrateful in them to crucify him, since he was of their race; and was also prophesied in their law, to be the true *Messiah, Christ Jesus*, who was to come, and who had farther shewed them so many signs, and given them so many proofs of his singular love. Wherefore (as some of the holy Fathers say) he prayed in this manner, saying, 'O heavenly Father, if it could stand with the salvation of my brethren the *Jews*, and that the *Gentiles* might, by some other means, be converted to thee, I would be glad to refuse this bitter Passion: But if otherwise it be expedient that the *Jews* be blinded in their malice, so that others after them may have a more perfect sight in the faith and true belief of thee, then not my will, but thine be fulfilled.'

There was in *Christ* at this time four kinds of wills, viz. The will of the flesh, which would noways agree to suffer. The will of sensuality,

sensuality; and this murmured and feared. The will of reason; and this consented and was obedient. And lastly, there was in him his divine will; which commanded and passed sentence. And as he was true man, as such he suffered great anguish of spirit, and underwent a most bitter agony. Wherefore have an inward and cordial compassion for him, and consider attentively every action of the Lord thy God.

After this he came to his Disciples, and said to them, "Now sleep and take your rest;" for their eyes were very heavy.

Thus the good shepherd was carefully watchful and vigilant over his little flock, his beloved Disciples. Oh how great was the love of our sweet Lord and Saviour towards them! For those whom he loved, he loved to the end; so that even in his great anguish and bitter agony, he was careful in procuring their rest and quiet repose.

C. H. A. P.

C H A P. LXI.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ taken and betrayed
by Judas.*

IMEDIATELY after our blessed Lord beheld his adversaries coming with burning torches and lanterns, and weapons to apprehend him; and yet he would not awaken his Disciples till they came near to him: And then he spoke, and said, "Rise, let us go: behold he approacheth that shall betray me." Matth. xxvi. And while he was speaking, came that wicked wretch *Judas*, the traitor, and approaching him, kissed him. For it is written, that it was the manner and custom of our Lord *Jesus* towards his Disciples, that when at any time he had sent them out, at their returning again, he would receive them with a loving kiss. Wherefore the traitor went before the wicked band, and kissed him as he was used to do, and said, "Hail, Master."

And here let us behold our Lord *Jesus*, how patiently and meekly he receives that false and treacherous kiss, from that unfaithful Disciple, whose feet so lately he had vouchsafed to wash with his own hands, and whom,

whom, out of his unspeakable charity he refused not to feed with the precious food of his blessed body. Consider likewise how meekly he suffered himself to be taken, bound, struck, and furiously dragged away, as if he had been a thief, or the most wicked person in the world, void of power, to help himself. Contemplate also the great sorrow and inward affliction he had for his Disciples, who fled and left him in the hands of those ravenous wolves. And on the other side, consider the grief of their hearts, since the cause of their leaving him was not the perversity of their will, but the frailty of their weak nature; for which they heartily mourn and sigh, like poor orphans, that know not what to do, or whither to go; and their sorrow was so much the greater, as they knew in what a villainous manner their Lord and Master would be treated and abused.

And incontinently those cruel butchers drive and pull him along as they would a beast to the slaughter, and he like a meek lamb, not opening his mouth, patiently follows them without resistance. First those vile wretches led him from the river *Cedron*, near which place they apprehended him, towards the city of *Jerusalem*, and that with great haste, pain, and violence, having his

blessed hands bound behind him as if he had been some grievous malefactor; having his garment torn from him, going bare-headed, and stooping, through the great haste and violent pain they forced him to, in going.

When he was brought before the chief Priests and Scribes that were then assembled together expecting his coming, they were rejoiced and glad that they had apprehended him; They then began to examine him, and to ask him many questions, endeavouring to ensnare him; they procured false witnesses against him, spit in his sacred face, blinded his eyes, buffeted and derided him, saying, "Tell us who it was that struck thee." Thus many and different ways they afflicted and tormented him, and in all he gave us most singular examples of patience.

At length the chief Judges rose up and departed, having ordered him to be kept in custody under a lock, in the nature of a prison, where they bound him to a pillar of stone, as those say who have seen it, leaving a guard of armed men with him for greater security; who, during the whole night, abused and derided him with many approving and reproachful speeches; saying, 'Dost thou believe thyself to be better or
' more

' more wise than our learned magistrates?
 ' Or can you imagine that they understand
 ' not the law and religion much better than
 ' you? How foolish dost thou appear in
 ' taking upon thee to reprehend and teach
 ' them, against whom thou shouldst not
 ' have presumed to open thy lips. Where-
 ' fore now your wisdom appears, in being
 ' obliged to suffer that which all such as you
 ' truly deserve; you are truly worthy of
 ' death, and it would be a pity that you
 ' should escape it.' Thus the whole night,
 sometimes one and sometimes another, both
 with scurrilous language and wicked works,
 continually reviled and abused him. And
 our blessed Lord, with bashful and modest
 countenance patiently bore it all, and was
 silent to every opprobrious word they said
 against him; but, with his eyes modestly
 inclined towards the ground, made no an-
 swer, as if he had been guilty and worthy
 of blame. O most amiable Lord, into whose
 hands art thou come? This is truly the
 hour, and power of darkness, and with what
 patience dost thou suffer it!
 Thus stood our blessed Redeemer, bound
 to that pillar, till the next morning. In
 the mean time *John*, who had followed him
 to the High Priest's house, went to the blessed
 Virgin, to *Mary Magdalen*, and other de-
 vout

your people who were at that time assembled at Mary Magdalene's house (where our Lord made that memorable supper the night before) and related to them all that had happened to our Lord and his Disciples; which when they had heard, they were seized with unspeakable grief, and wept most bitterly. Consider them attentively, and have compassion on them; for they are now in the greatest grief and affliction that ever they were in for their Lord; for they now plainly see and know full well that he will be taken from them and put to a cruel death. Our blessed Lady retired alone to prayer, and said, ' O most sovereign, most high, and most merciful Father, I present myself before thy Majesty to recommend to thy protection my dearly beloved Son, O gracious Father, reveal to me whether my Son *Jesus* shall be put to death or not. Be not severe to him, O bountiful Father, who to all others art so good and merciful; for he knows no sin, nor ever committed any evil, O most just Father, if thou requirest his death for the redemption of the world, I beseech thee if possible, to find out some other means whereby to accomplish thy design, and that my blessed Son's life may be spared if it be thy holy will, for all things are possible to thee. And he,

out

out of obedience to thee, has abandoned
 himself into the hands of his enemies; and
 will not attempt to deliver himself from
 their power. Wherefore I beseech thee,
 O heavenly Father, to help him, and to
 deliver him to me again out of their wicked
 hands. Thus, or in words to this effect,
 our blessed Lady prayed for her Son in the
 profound sorrow and grief of her soul;
 wherefore we ought to accompany her in
 her distress, and be moved with compassion
 towards her in this her so great affliction.

C H A P. LXII.

*Our blessed Lord carried before Pilate; his
 being scourged at the pillar, and crowned
 with thorns.*

EARLY on the morrow, the seniors and
 chiefs of the people returned and caused
 Jesus to be bound, and led with his hands
 fastened behind him; and thus handcuffed,
 brought him to Pilate, mocking, reviling,
 and insulting him with the most abusive
 taunts, as he proceeded on the way. Thus
 went this innocent Lamb, in the guise of a
 malefactor, hurried by the merciless butchers
 to

to unmerited slaughter. As he was going on his way, his blessed Mother, *St. John*, and the holy women who accompanied the former, who had left their modest retirement so early on purpose to come to his assistance and comfort, met him at the winding of a street: and what tongue can express the bitter anguish of their souls at the sad sight of their Lord thus hurried along by an insulting, abusive mob? Or what degree of imbred grief can figure the excess of mutual sorrow this interview begot on both sides? Our Lord could not but suffer extremely through the compassion he felt for his beloved followers, and chiefly for his Mother. For he knew full well the bitter grief they felt for him, sufficient to tear their bleeding souls from their convulsed bodies.

He was then brought before *Pilate*, and the women followed at a distance, the thronging rabble not suffering them to approach any nearer. Many accusations were laid against him to *Pilate*; but *Pilate*, finding all to be groundless, and desirous to rid himself of so odious a prosecution, dispatched him to *Herod*. *Herod* was much pleased at this, hoping by this means to see a miracle wrought by *Christ*: but he could not obtain the least gratification of this sort from *Christ*, who

who thought him unworthy even to hear a word from his sacred mouth. Hence *Herod*, looking upon him as an idiot, caused him to be cloathed in a white raiment, the usual habit of fools in those days, and thus in derision, sent him back to *Pilate*. So that *Christ* patiently bore to be reputed both a fool and a malefactor by all, without deserving either from any. Contemplate him then as he is led backwards and forwards, with his eyes modestly depressed, hearing the shouts and taunts, receiving the buffets, spittings, and perhaps filth thrown at him by a rude populace, without murmur or complaint; cast a pitying eye upon him in this sad plight, and with him compassionate his afflicted Mother, and beloved Disciples, who follow him as closely as they may, for the mob, till they reach the palace of *Pilate*. Here again he is loaded by the savage brutes with false accusations, which they utter with the utmost impudence and inveteracy. Yet *Pilate*, finding in him nothing that bore the appearance of guilt, sought means to free him from their hands. Wherefore says he, "I will punish, and dismiss him." O *Pilate*! dost thou presume to chastise thy Lord and Sovereign! Surely thou art beside thyself thus to dare to inflict stripes on him who is as guiltless of stripes as of death. Oh, how much

much more wisely had you acted to chastise yourself by his admonition! However, *Pilate* was besotted enough to order him to be most inhumanely scourged.

Wherefore, by his order, our most innocent Lord was stripped naked, bound to a pillar, and severely scourged. Thus was that innocent Lamb, and most beautiful among the children of men, shamefully exposed, naked and abashed, before the whole populace; and received with invincible patience the cruel stripes of his barbarous executioners. So that the most beautiful flower of human nature, and the fairest and most delicate of all flesh, was covered with stripes, wounds and bruises, inasmuch that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, his most precious blood ran, flowing from all parts of his sacred body, in great abundance upon the ground, being so long scourged and beat, that they added wound to wound, bruise to bruise, and stripe to stripe; till at length, the inhuman spectators being weary to behold any longer what the cruel butchers themselves were wholly tired of, he was ordered to be unbound. Wherefore he was loosed from the pillar, on which the stains of his precious blood are still to be seen, as many authentic historians affirm.

Here,

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Here, pious reader, let me intreat you to dwell some time on this subject, and attentively consider, with heart full of sorrow and compassion, the extremity of his bitter pains: and if you find not your heart to be moved, or even to melt with grief and compunction at so great sufferings of your blessed Lord, you may conclude that it is more hard and impenetrable than any stone. It was then fulfilled of him, what the Prophet *Isaiah* had long before prophesied, saying, "We have seen him, and there was neither form nor beauty left, and we esteemed him as a leper and as one smitten by God and humbled." O sweet *Jesus*, who dared to be so bold as to presume to strip thee of thy garments? Who was it that dared with more assurance to bind thee to the pillar? And who most audacious of all, could presume to beat and scourge thee in that cruel manner? But thou, O most bright Son of Righteousness! thou, I say, didst withdraw the resplendant beams of thy glory, and didst vouchsafe to abscond thy power and might, so that darkness, and the power of darkness reigned for a time, and thy enemies appeared, by thy divine permission, more powerful than thyself. It was the excess of thy love, and the greatness of our iniquity, which disarmed thee of thy
U u
strength

strength in this conflict. But cursed be that malice which caused thee to be thus cruelly tormented.

After this they led him round the palace to seek for his clothes, which were scattered about in different parts of the house, some in one place, and some in another, by those barbarous executioners who had stripped him. Here ought tenderness to move us to compassion towards him, thus afflicted and trembling with cold. For, as the gospel tells us, the weather was sharp and piercing. As he was clothing himself again, some of the wicked populace went to *Pilate*, and said, ' This man said he was king, wherefore let us clothe him after our manner, and crown him as such.' Hence, taking him aside, they clothed him in a purple garment; and plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and with violence pressed them into his sacred temples; then giving him a reed instead of a scepter, they kneeled down and saluted him in derision, saying, " Hail, King of the Jews." To all which *Jesus* made no answer; and like a meek and patient lamb opened not his mouth. Here behold with melting heart, how often they strike him upon the head with a reed, to drive the piercing thorns more deeply into his sacred temples, so that they

they forced the blood from every part, which running down in great abundance, covered his blessed face. Consider how he behaves in every action, and how patiently he bears every insult which they offer to him; they deride and mock him as one who would make himself king, without power to effect it. He is clothed in purple, carries a crown of thorns on his head, holds a reed in his hand, and they on their knees, salute him in derision as king, and he is silent, and murmurs not. But, oh miserable and wicked wretches! how dreadful shall that blessed head appear at the last day, which now you abuse and beat so inhumanly! Neither was all they had hitherto done sufficient to weaken their malice against him; but, to add more to his reproach, they brought into the house many of the mob to gaze on him; after which they led him out to *Pilate*, and shewed him to the whole multitude; having on his purple garment, his crown of thorns, and a scepter of a reed in his hand. In this manner stood that innocent lamb, with his eyes modestly depressed before that great multitude, who scoffed and derided him, and with the loudest shouts exclaimed against, crying out to *Pilate*, "Crucify him, crucify him."

C H A P. LXIII.

Our blessed Lord Jesus condemned to suffer the cruel death of the cross, and compelled to carry the same to Mount Calvary.

OUR blessed Lord Jesus having been been many ways shamefully reviled, mocked and abused, and suffered many cruel torments among them; yet the chief of the Jews continually sought his death, and stirred up the whole multitude to join with him, and to cry out to *Pilate* to have him crucified. At length the wicked Judge, fearing more to incur their displeasure than wrongfully to condemn the innocent, passed sentence of death upon him. Then were the Scribes and Pharisees full of joy that they had prospered in their designs, and attained their wicked ends against him. For then they remembered not the benefit they had received from him, nor the miracles he had wrought among them for their good; they neither pitied him for his innocence, nor were moved at the cruelty and baseness of the action they were going to commit; and instead of ceasing from their wicked purpose in consideration of the great affliction, sufferings, and reproaches they had inflicted upon
upon



Jesus Bearing of his Cross

upon him they rejoiced and were glad that
 their signs were now near the execution.
 Whence they revile, mock, and insult
 him who is the true and eternal God, and
 hasten as far as possible his death. Hence
 he is again carried back into the house,
 stripped of his purple garment, and left
 thus naked before them. Stop here a mo-
 ment, and seriously consider the make
 and form of his wounds: and that you
 may be moved to inward compassion to-
 wards him, and your love with devout
 contemplation, that your love for a mo-
 ment to his sufferings. Consider him as
 your man, and your fellow creature among
 the sons of men in his condition,
 full of wounds and bruises, covered with
 blood, naked and shivering, feeling and ga-
 thering together his garments, which were
 dispersed in different parts of the house by
 those cruel and merciless judges, and cloth-
 ing himself before them, who had insult-
 ing and reviling him as if he had been the
 most contemptible of all creatures, forsaken
 by God, and despised of all help and com-
 fort. Then consider the profound and
 wonderful meekness of him as God and
 man: behold how that infinite, eternal,
 and incomprehensible Majesty stoops to the
 ground.



upon him, they rejoiced and were glad that their designs were now near the execution. Wherefore they revile, mock, and insult him who is the true and eternal God, and hasten as far as possible his death. Hence he is again carried back into the house, stripped of his purple garment, and left thus naked before them. Stop here a moment, and attentively consider the make and form of his sacred body: and that you may be moved to inward compassion towards him, and feed your soul with devout contemplation, close your eyes for a moment to his divinity, and consider him as pure man, and you will behold the most lovely, fair, innocent, and beautiful among the sons of men in that doleful condition, full of wounds and bruises, covered with blood, naked and abashed, seeking and gathering together his garments, which were dispersed in different parts of the house by those cruel and merciless brutes, and cloathing himself before them, who stood insulting and reviling him as if he had been the most contemptible of all creatures, forsaken by God, and destitute of all help and comfort. Then consider the profound and wonderful meekness of him as God and man; behold how that immense, eternal, and incomprehensible Majesty stoops to the ground,

ground, collects his garments, and bashfully clothes himself before his enemies, as though he was the vilest of men, their bought slave, under their dominion, and by them chastised as a base and unpardonable delinquent. After this accompany him out, and behold how, after he has put on his clothes, they hurry him away, and load him with the heavy wood of the cross, which, as historians say, was fifteen feet in length; this the most meek and innocent lamb took and bore upon his blessed shoulders. Thus was he hurried along by an enraged mob, in company with two thieves who were condemned to death; these were his companions in suffering. Oh sweet and beloved *Jesus*, how much do these thy false friends debase thee, by making thee a companion with thieves! And what is still worse, they compel thee to carry thy own cross, which is a burthen they imposed not upon them. Wherefore, as the Prophet *Isaiah* saith, "You are not only numbered with evil doers, but are used worse than they." Thy patience, O Lord, is unspeakable. And now, devout Christian, with all possible attention and devotion, observe our Lord *Jesus* how he bends under the weight of the cross, vehemently sighing, and wearied. Take pity on him in this sad plight of renewed afflictions and calumnies.

His

His blessed and afflicted Mother, seeing that she could not approach near him for the great concourse of people which pressed about him, went, with St. John and the rest of her companions, a nearer way, to the end that she might meet him at the winding of the street. And when she perceived him coming, over-loaded with the heavy tree of the cross, which before she had not seen, she was like one beside herself, and half dead with sorrow, so that she could neither speak to him, nor he to her, by reason of the furious mob which hurried him along with great violence and compulsion. After, however, that he had gone a little way, he turned back to the women that followed weeping, and said: "Ye daughters of *Jerusalem*, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children," &c. as is farther contained in the Gospel. And in these two places were erected two churches in memory of these things, as they report who have been there and seen them: And as Mount Calvary was far distant from the city, he was so tired and faint that he was not able to carry his cross the whole way, but fell down under it with weariness. Wherefore the wicked executioners not willing to defer his death, and fearing lest *Pilate* should revoke his sen-

sentence, as he had before shewn a kind of inclination to release him: They therefore compelled one *Simon* a stranger to carry it for him, and *Jesus* they led unburdened, but bound like a thief, to the place of execution.

Now if we attentively consider all that hath been done to our Lord *Jesus*, and the many things he hath suffered from the time he was first apprehended to this present, we shall doubtless find therein great matter of sorrow and compunction. For we may truly believe that from the hour in which he was first taken in the night, till the time of his being crucified, he was in one continual combat, and endured many reproaches, many injuries, many sorrows and detractions, and suffered many cruel torments among them. For there was no manner of rest given him but continual trouble and vexation. And here may you dwell, devout reader, for some short space of time, and take a short review of that which hitherto hath been acted against him; First, How one lays violent hands upon him and apprehends him, another binds him straitly with cords, another blasphemes him, another spits in his sacred face; another proposeth to him subtle questions in order to ensnare him, another produceth false witness

ness against him, another drags him backwards and forwards, from one judge to another, another blindfolds his eyes, another buffets him, another strips him of his clothes, another binds him to a pillar, another most cruelly scourgeth him, another unbinds him and clothes him in a purple garment, another platteth a crown of thorns upon his head, another puts a reed into his hand, another takes it from him, and striking him with it upon the head, drives the thorns into his sacred temples, another kneeleth down before him and mocketh him, and so of the rest, sometimes one, and sometimes another. Now they lead him to *Annas*, now to *Caiphas*, then to *Pilate*, and from thence to *Herod*; now hither, and now thither, now out, and then in again. And finally to conclude, he was dragged and hurried along with great violence and without rest till he came to *Mount Calvary*, which was the place fixed for the period of this doleful combat.

C H A P. LXIV.

*The nailing our Lord Jesus Christ to
the Cross.*

WHEN our blessed Lord *Jesus* was now come to *Mount Calvary*, those wicked and merciless butchers began then to effect their cruel work. Be present now with all the attention of your mind to these things, and devoutly consider every particular relating to the Lord your God. Behold with the interior eyes of your soul, some preparing the cross, some making ready the ropes and cords to bind him, some the nails and hammers to fasten him, others preparing the ladder and other instruments, some digging the hole in the earth to fix the cross in, and others busy in stripping him, so that this is the third time of his being stripped, by which his wounds are again renewed by the violent tearing off his clothes which were cleaved to his sacred flesh. His blessed Mother when she beheld him thus used, was afflicted beyond expression. And oh how full of bitter anguish indeed may we well imagine was her tender soul, in beholding her beloved and innocent

THE LIFE OF



THE CRUCIFIXION

...son thus shamefully abused, and
loaded with injuries and insults? Then was
he extended upon the cross, as it lay upon
the ground, and with cords stretching forth
his violence his lacerated hands and feet, the
and his fingers with long iron nails dar-
ticularly piercing them, nailed him fast to it.
Thus was our Lord and Saviour Jesus
Christ tethered to the cross hand and foot,
and to eternally stained thereon, that
is the royal Father said: All his
bones must be numbered, and his lacerated
blood must be drawn from his blessed
veins in great pain, and his arms
and legs were stretched with the
nails, that he should move any part of
his body, except head. And as his
whole body was supported only by these
nails, undoubtedly his pains were great be-
cause what any heart can conceive of
tongue express. But to add still approach
to his grief, he was crucified between two
other, and amidst insults, contempt, and
sling from all parts. Therefore one
reproaches him, others shake their heads,
and say: Tread ye on thee, thou art he
that wouldst destroy the temple of God,
and build it up again in three days? Some
say: Others he saved himself, he cannot
save, and if thou be the Son of God be-
come down from the cross.



nocent Son thus shamefully abused, and loaded with injuries and insults ! Then was he extended upon the cross, as it lay upon the ground, and with cords stretching forth with violence his sacred hands and feet, the cruel slaughterers with long iron nails barbarously piercing them, nailed him fast to it.

Thus was our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* fastened to the cross hand and foot, and so extremely strained thereon, that as the royal Prophet saith; ‘ All his ‘ bones might be numbered:’ and his sacred blood ran forth in streams from his blessed wounds in great abundance: and his arms and legs were so wide stretched with the nails, that he could not move any part of his body, except his head. And as his whole body was supported only by three nails, undoubtedly his pains were great beyond what any heart can conceive, or tongue express. But to add still reproach to his grief, he was crucified between two thieves, and suffered insults, contempt, and reviling from all parts. Wherefore one blasphemes him, others shook their heads, and said: ‘ Faugh, fye on thee, thou art he ‘ that wouldst destroy the temple of God, ‘ and build it up again in three days.’ Some said: ‘ Others he saved, himself he cannot ‘ save; and if thou be the Son of God de-

‘scend now from the cross that we may believe.’ And those who crucified him, divided his garment among them before his face. All this was acted in the presence of his afflicted Mother who stood under the cross, whose tender compassion and tears added much to the sorrow and affliction of her Son. For she accompanied him in her soul on the cross, and inwardly desired rather to die with him, than to live any longer without him. Thus stood the doleful Mother beside the cross of her Son: she never turned her eyes from him, she was afflicted and full of anguish with him; and with many bitter sighs prayed to her heavenly Father, saying: ‘Oh heavenly Father and sovereign Lord of Majesty, without doubt it was foreseen and pleasing to thee from all eternity, that my most beloved and innocent Son should shed his precious blood, and be crucified for the sins of the world, wherefore it is not convenient to ask him of you again. But most holy Father, thou seest the bitter Torment and present anguish of his soul, wherefore I beseech thee, ease him of his pain, and release him if it be thy heavenly will.

And her blessed Son prayed secretly to his Father for her, saying, ‘Oh, good Father, look down I beseech thee on my afflicted Mother,

‘ Mother, and behold how deeply she is
 ‘ tormented for me: My being crucified is
 ‘ sufficient for the sins of mankind; she
 ‘ hath not deserved any such thing, and
 ‘ yet she is with me in heart upon the cross,
 ‘ and she bears an equal share with me in
 ‘ my pains. Wherefore I recommend her
 ‘ to thee, beseeching thee that it would
 ‘ please thee to assuage and lessen her
 ‘ grief.’

There was also with our blessed Lady the
 beloved Disciple *St. John*, and *Mary Mag-*
dalena, and the two sisters of our Lady, *Mary*
of James, and *Mary of Salome*, and other
 of his friends standing under the cross, who
 all, but especially *Mary Magdalen* the be-
 loved of *Jesus*, were very sorrowful and
 wept bitterly, and could noways be com-
 forted; because of the pains of their beloved
 Master: for their sorrow was often renewed
 with his, either in these words, or deeds
 which were said or done to him.

C H A P.

The words which our Lord spoke while hanging upon the cross; and of his yielding up his spirit.

OUR Lord Jesus hanging on the cross, ceased not to do, and to speak those things which were for our advantage, even to the last moment in which he gave up his spirit: Wherefore he spoke seven times, as is written in the Gospel.

The first thing he said was when he prayed for his enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." O wonderful patience, charity, and benignity!

The second was to his Mother, when he said, "Woman, behold thy Son;" and to John, "Behold thy Mother." He would not call her at that time Mother, lest the tenderness of the expression should have occasioned her more grief.

The third was to the good thief; saying, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." In which words he shewed his infinite and unbounded mercy towards us.

The fourth was when he said, "Eloi, Eloi, Lamasabathani." That is to say; "My

“ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” As if he had said more plainly thus: ‘ My God, thou hast so much loved the world, that while you give me to death for its redemption, you seem to have forsaken me.’

The fifth was, “ Sitio;” I thirst! Which word gave occasion to his enemies to rejoice, and to his Mother greater occasion of compassion. And although this word may be understood of his thirst for the salvation of souls; yet he truly thirsted for drink: for by the great effusion of his blood, he had little moisture left within him. Wherefore his cruel butchers, who were studying how they might torment him, took vinegar mixed with gall, and put it to his mouth that he might drink.

The sixth was when he said, “ Consummatum est;” It is finished! As if he said, ‘ O Father, I have perfectly and obediently fulfilled all the commands you gave me, and all that has hitherto been writ of me; wherefore now, if it please thee, receive me again to thyself.’ To which, we may for devotion’s sake imagine, his Father replied, ‘ Come, my beloved Son, for thou hast fulfilled all things completely, and I will not that you suffer any more; come then and resign thy soul into my arms, and repose thyself forever in my bosom.’

And

And then our blessed *Jesus* began to fail in his sight, after the nature of dying men, and grew faint and languishing, sometimes closing and sometimes opening his eyes; and bowing his head, first on one side, and then on the other, till being quite spent, and his strength failing, he recommended his soul to his Father, crying out with a loud voice, and pronouncing the seventh word, saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" With which he yielded up the ghost.

At this strong and vehement cry of our Lord *Jesus*, a Centurion who was standing by was converted, and immediately said, 'Verily, this man is the Son of God;' because he heard him cry so loud when he expired.

Oh, in what a sad and sorrowful condition may we well suppose was the tender heart of his blessed Mother when she beheld him to languish in so painful a manner, to cry out, and to die in her presence! We may easily believe that her spirits failed her, and that she was ready to give up the ghost with him, much more than when she met him carrying his cross. And what can we think of *Mary Magdalen*, of *St. John* his beloved Disciple, and of the other two sisters of our Lady? Undoubtedly they were brimful

ful of inexpressible sorrow, loaded with grief, and overwhelmed with bitterness and tears, without any kind of comfort, and not knowing what to do.

Behold now our Lord *Jesus* hangeth dead upon the cross, and the multitude of people return again to the city. But the most afflicted Mother, with the other four, remain still at the cross, feeding their souls with the divine contemplation of their Beloved, and wait for help from God, that they might have him taken from the cross and bury him.

If you also, Christian soul, will behold your Lord in devout contemplation, you cannot chuse but conceive a tender compassion, seeing that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was no whole part left in him; there was not a member, or any sense which had not their extreme pain and affliction.

Employ thyself then in the daily study of these sufferings of thy Lord, and make them the frequent subject of your devout meditation.

C H A P. LXVI.

*The opening of our blessed Saviour's side
with a spear.*

WHILE the blessed Mother of our Lord Jesus, with St. John, St. Mary Magdalen, and the two sisters of our blessed Lady sat beside the cross with her eyes attentively fixed on her beloved Son, contemplating him thus hanging dead between two thieves, forsaken and abandoned: there came many men from the city towards them; being sent to break the legs of those who were crucified, and to kill them downright if they were not dead, that their bodies might not be seen hanging on the cross upon the Sabbath-day. Our blessed Lady with the rest rose up to behold, and saw them coming, but knew not for what reason: Wherefore their sorrow was renewed, and their fear encreased more as they saw them advance nearer. His blessed Mother being more sensibly affected than the rest, and not knowing what to do, turned herself towards her beloved Son and said, 'My most dear Son to what end, I beseech thee, do these cruel butchers return hither again? What more do they intend to do? Have they

'they not already taken away thy life? I
 'was in hopes that they were satisfied with
 'what they had done before to thee while
 'thou wast living: But now it seemeth that
 'they have not yet done with thee, but they
 'will farther pursue thee dead. I know not,
 'my beloved Son, how to act, since I am
 'as unable of helping thee now, as I was
 'before in delivering thee from death. I
 'will approach however and stand near the
 'cross at thy blessed feet, and beseech thy
 'heavenly Father to render them favour-
 'able towards thee.'

Hence they all five, bitterly weeping,
 went and placed themselves before the cross
 of our Lord *Jesus*. And the multitude,
 hastily advancing, came with great shouts
 and noise, and seeing that the two thieves
 were yet living, with great rage they broke
 their legs and killed them, and taking them
 down, cast them into a ditch. And then re-
 turning, they came to our Lord *Jesus*. And
 his blessed Mother, pierced to the heart with
 grief, fearing lest they might do the same to
 him, had recourse to her usual weapon of
 humility: Wherefore, kneeling down before
 them with her arms extended, and with a
 loud and compassionate voice spake to them
 in this manner; 'I beseech you, brethren,
 'for the love of God most High and Al-
 Y y 2 'mighty,

'mighty, that you will no more afflict or
 'torment me in my most dear Son: I am
 'truly his most sorrowful and disconsolate
 'Mother, whom you know has never in-
 'jured or offended you. And if my be-
 'loved Son seemed to oppose you, you
 'have put him to death for it. What more
 'can your revenge require? Forbear then
 'to insult him any longer, and I will com-
 'pound for, and forgive you what injuries
 'you have hitherto done me in his death
 'and sufferings. But, oh be thus far mer-
 'ciful in your cruelty; break not his dear
 'corse, but suffer me to carry it whole to
 'the sepulchre. What will it avail to break
 'his limbs, who has already expired this
 'hour past?" Thus did the sacred Virgin
 persist on her knees, with *John* and *Magda-*
len, and the other devout women, weeping,
 and entreating those inhuman butchers! O
 sacred Lady, to what purpose dost thou thus
 demean thyself to those barbarous wretches!
 Can you hope for any success with such inex-
 orable savages? Will pity make the impious
 relent? Will the merciless give yearnings of
 mercy, or pride truckle to humility? Alas!
 your endeavours are ineffectual: condescen-
 sion is the aversion of the proud.

One *Longinus* by name, at that time a
 wicked, haughty man, but afterwards a
 convert,

convert, a saint, nay, a martyr, stretched forth his lance, and seeming to give ear to their cries, pierced our Lord's sacred side, when immediately from his wide wound gushed forth water and blood. At this sight his disconsolate Mother fell into a swoon in the arms of *Magdalen*: and while *St. John* and the holy women were busied in supporting and bringing to herself our blessed Lady, the impious butchers departed. And now at her recovery, a new taste of death succeeded the former, when she beheld her beloved, divine Son, hanging dead on the cross in so mangled and deplorable a condition. Oh! how many strokes of deaths did not this spotless Lady feel on this day! Who can doubt of their being equal in number to the insults and cruelties used to him. And thus was fulfilled what *Simeon* foretold, that "the sword of sorrow should pierce her soul." Thus did one lance, with the same sacrilegious stroke, rip open the blessed body of *Jesus*, and the sacred soul of *Mary*.

When our blessed Lady was perfectly recovered, they all sat down at the feet of the cross, at a loss what or how to do. How to take down and where to deposit the holy corse they could not contrive, for want of strength, and for want of a sepulchre to
put

put it in. To depart and leave him on the cross in that condition, they knew not how to resolve, and to remain there long was neither decent nor safe, for night was coming on. What perplexity! O bountiful God, how didst thou suffer this thy favourite, this mirror of all virtues, this our sacred advocate and protectress to be afflicted! Surely it were time she had some respite from the excess of anguish.

C H A P. LXVII.

The taking down our Lord from the cross.

AGAIN they saw several persons coming along the road: these were *Joseph of Arimathea*, and *Nicodemus*, and some persons with them, who brought instruments to take down the sacred body from the cross, and a great quantity of myrrh and aloes to embalm it. This gave them a new alarm, not knowing at a distance but they might be persons coming to offer new outrages to the blessed corse. Wherefore, they all arose immediately and falling on their knees applied themselves to prayer, beseeching God to avert the affliction they seemed

seemed again threatened with. At length, however, St. *John* discovered who they were, and returning thanks to God, they all began to be comforted. Our blessed Lady then dispatched St. *John* immediately to meet them, who brought them to the cross where the holy women were, and presented them to the afflicted Mother of God. Our blessed Lady received them graciously, and with all the joy compatible with her present state of grief: *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* condoled with her and the pious company. Then all falling on their knees adored the sacred relict of our Lord, and after some time spent in devout and humble prayer, and religious homage, they all again arose and prepared to take him down from the cross.

While the holy company are busied in their devout offices to *Christ*, endeavour, pious reader, to be as devoutly attentive to all that passes. * Two ladders then are fixed to the cross, one to each arm. *Joseph*, while *Nicodemus* goes up that on the left hand, ascends the other on the right, and labours to draw the nail with which that hand is fastened. This was done not without a great

* The manner of taking *Christ* from the cross.

deal of difficulty, and bruising the divine flesh, for the nails were of an immoderate grossness. However the action was acceptable to God, inasmuch as it was a necessitated violence, and practised only through the utmost purity of intention and liveliness of faith. When *Joseph* had drawn out the nail, *St. John* made a sign to him to give it to him with privacy, which, when he received it he hid it in his bosom that the afflicted Virgin might not see it. Then *Nicodemus* extracted the nail from the left hand, and gave it likewise to *St. John*, who joined it devoutly with the former. When the nails were thus drawn from the hands of our blessed Redeemer, *Nicodemus* descended to draw out that which fastened his heavenly feet, while *Joseph* supported the body. O thrice happy *Joseph*, who was deemed worthy to embrace so divine, so inestimable a treasure; While *Joseph* held the sacred body leaning on his arms, our blessed Lady took hold of the blessed hand which hung down, and pressing it reverently and tenderly to her holy face and lips, kissed it, pressed it, and devoutly bathed it with her motherly, virgin tears. Oh nature, what a spectacle! Oh human heart, what must thou be not to melt at such a sight? When the nail was extracted from the feet, *Joseph* descended

descended by degrees, while the others received the heavenly body of our Lord, and reposed it decently on the ground. Our blessed Lady then raised the holy head and shoulders and placed them on her lap, and then *Magdalen* prostrating herself, embraced his sacred feet, whence she had once received such a plentitude of grace. All the rest stood round joining their sighs and tears, and bitterly bemoaning the only begotten of God thus disfigured by base ungrateful man.

C H A P. LXVIII.

The embalming and burial of our Lord.

AFTER a short space, as night was drawing on, *Joseph* besought our Lady to permit him to embalm and wrap up the sacred body in the fine linen he had brought with him for that purpose. But she knew not how to part with the dear treasure so soon again. I intreat you, my friends, said she, rob me not so soon of my dear, my only Son, of all that is dear to me in this life; rather, if you are in haste to bury him, lay me in the sepulchre by him.

him. Oh that I might, dearest *Jesus*, lay by thee and never be separated from thee. Tears flowed swiftly down her virgin cheeks; and sighs forbid her words an utterance. Silent and sad she viewed the lovely, mangled form; now she examined, one by one, the reeking wounds still fresh and full of clodded blood; now she picked out, with care and cruel anguish, one after one, the long and splintered thorns still buried in his temples; now she beheld his head, and now his face, composing the few straggling hairs which blinded inhumanity had left upon his head and beard; and washing off the dirt and spittle from his divine countenance with floods of tears; unfatigued with weeping, sighing, and gazing on the object of her anguish. Thus fixed, and immoveable the afflicted Mother dwelt with her eyes on the beloved, lovely form of her divine Son, and was not to be removed from him, till St. *John*, with reverence approaching, intreated her to consider the lateness of the day, and to consent that *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* might do their pious offices in time, to prevent any insults or calumnies of the *Jews*. To this remonstrance the wise and humble Virgin yielded, remembering well that her dearest *Jesus* had recommended her to the care of this faithful

ful, loving Disciple. And therefore, without contending, she gave them her blessing, and permission to dress and wrap him up. St. *John* then with *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* immediately embalmed the holy body, and wrapped it in the fine linen cloth. While they were busied about the body, the blessed Virgin still kept the head upon her lap, and the *Magdalen* was still officious about his feet. Here kneeled the illustrious penitent almost dissolved with excess of grief, and now on those sacred limbs which compunction elsewhere bathed with her tears, unspeakable grief and tender compassion made her pour a double flood. She beheld those dear feet cruelly pierced and torn, mangled and bloody, but could not behold them clearly from the bitterness of her weeping. The Evangelist bears witness that she loved exceedingly, and therefore who can be amazed that she should grieve exceedingly to see our Lord, whom she thus loved, and to see him thus mangled, dead, and reduced almost to nothing? Scarce could her breast contain her heart thus big with panting anguish: nor is it improbable that, if she might, she would have gladly expired at the feet of her dead Lord. This was the ninth and last office she could pay her divine Master, and in doing this how bitterly was she

strung with affliction that she could not do it in the manner she wished. She would fain have laid out the blessed body, anointed, and wrapped it wholly of herself with that decency and reverence due to it. But neither the time nor the place would permit it; for at that time she could not do any more, nor in a better manner, than to bathe his venerable plants with her tears, dry them with her locks, kiss them, and reverently wrap them in the linen: this she did, and did it with a diligence equal to her affection.

When thus the body and feet of our divine Saviour were wrapped up, they all turned their looks towards our blessed Lady to learn her pleasure, and share her parting grief. And she, finding now there was no more time to delay, threw her face on that of her heavenly Son. Oh precious Son Jesus! do I still hold you dead on my lap? And must I? must I then part from you? O cruel, unspeakable, cruel divorce of death. Sweet and delightful was our converse with each other, and free from injury or offence to any, why then do I see thee, sweet offspring of my bowels, thus mangled and murdered like a public nuisance? How faithfully, how dutifully, how tenderly did you when alive wait on and cherish me, yet what return was I able to make

'make you in this dreadful conflict? You
 'heavenly Father was able alone to assist
 'yon: I could not; and he, for his ineffably
 'divine reasons would not. Blessed be his
 'Holy Name alike for all he has done. But
 'why my only Joy did you abandon your
 'self? Ah! it was for the generous love of
 'mankind, whom you came to redeem:
 'Alas! how dear has this redemption cost
 'you? Yet dear as it has been, it redounds
 'to your glory and their salvation, I sub-
 'mit to, nay, rejoice in it. And if I do
 'grieve, forgive me, all-bounteous *Jesus*,
 'forgive me these tears and sighs, which
 'finely are but due from so beloved a Parent
 'to so lovely, loving, and divine a Son.
 'How can I refrain from tears when I be-
 'hold to what a deplorable condition the
 'sins of man have brought you? You had
 'neither sin nor harm in you. Now, ah!
 'O now our social converse with each other
 'is broken off; now I part from you, my
 'only Solace. Well, since it is your will,
 'to it shall be mine; and these hands, in obe-
 'dience to your divine pleasure, shall bury
 'your sacred body. And then whither, or
 'to whom shall I, your afflicted Mother, fly
 'for protection and refuge? How shall I
 'live without you? Oh that I might be bu-
 'ried with you! Oh that one tomb might
 con-

contain us both, that we might never be
 separated in body any more than in mind!
 Go then, lovely *Jesus*! Go to your sepul-
 chre, and since my body may not be there
 entombed with yours, my soul shall still
 accompany you thither, and there forever
 dwell with you. To you then I offer and
 recommend it. Oh Son, oh dearest, oh
 divine Son, how hard is this separation!
 A flood of tears followed her words, and
 and bathed the sacred face of *Christ* more
 plentifully than the *Magdalen* had bathed
 his feet. She wiped them off however, and
 kissing his lips and eyes, wrapped up the holy
 head in the linen. After which all again
 falling on the ground, and paying their
 adorations, took the sacred Body and bore it
 to the monument; our blessed Lady hold-
 ing up the head, *St. Mary Magdalen* the
 feet, and the rest of them the body.
 Near the place where our Saviour was
 crucified, was a sepulchre, in which they
 buried our Lord with reverence, tears,
 sighs, and adorations. After he was laid in
 the monument, the afflicted Mother em-
 braced him, and clung to him for a while;
 but *St. John* and the holy women raised her,
 and rolled a huge stone against the en-
 trance in the monument. Venerable *Beda*
 tells us, that this monument was a kind of
 round

round mansion, hewn out of a rock beneath, so high that a man could not reach, with his arm perpendicularly raised, to the roof of it. Its entrance stood Eastward: and in it our Lord's body was placed in a tomb, on the North side, of seven feet long.

C H A P. LXIX.

Our blessed Lady's departure from the Sepulchre, and return to Mount Sion.

WHEN *Joseph* had compleated his office of burying our Saviour, and was upon the point of returning to *Jerusalem*, he came to the blessed Virgin, and intreated her with many solicitations to retire to his house with the companions and sharers in her grief, offering it and all he was master of in it to her service and command. But our blessed Lady graciously returning him thanks, excused herself from going thither, for that she was committed by her beloved Son to the care of his beloved Disciple *John*; who, when *Joseph* turned to him to beseech him to prevail upon her to honour his house with her sacred presence, told them, that he must lead her immediately to *Mount Sion*, the place

place where *Jesus* had but the night before supped with his Disciples, and where he himself proposed to remain with her. Upon which, they forthwith adored at the Sepulchre, and after paying their submission to the holy Virgin, and their respects to her company, they went their way: But our blessed Lady, *St. John*, and the devout women, remained sometime longer opposite to the Sepulchre.

At length *St. John* remonstrating to our blessed Lady that it was neither safe to remain there late at night, nor decent to enter the city much later in the day, she humbly arose, and kneeling before the Sepulchre, embraced it, saying, 'Farewel, my dearest best-beloved Son; since I may not, must not stay any longer near thee, I commend thee to thy eternal Father's all-wise and mighty care.' Then lifting her eyes to Heaven, with abundance of tears and heart full of grief, 'To you, O eternal Father, I recommend this dear deposit of your and my only begotten Son. Oh take under your protection, and guard from every insult his precious body, and with it accept my soul, which I here leave together with it.' Then rising, she departed with her companions from the monument.

When

When they came again to the cross, she kneeled down and adored, saying, "Here died my dear, my precious Son: here he poured out the generous sea of blood for man's redemption." And, after her example, all did the same. Nor is it without good grounds that we may believe our blessed Lady to have been the first reverer of the cross. When they drew nigh to the city, the women veiled her like a widow, and walked distressed and afflicted before her; and she proceeded after them with her head and face quite covered, between St. John and St. Mary Magdalen. At their entrance into town, a pious contention arose between these two; *Magdalen* pleading hard that our blessed Lady might come to reside at her house, alledging the goodness with which our Lord had honoured her in his life-time, in resorting to it: but St. John, on the other hand, was desirous of leading the sacred Virgin to *Mount Sion*, where he said she would be safer, and more within the reach of all their friends. Accordingly, our blessed Lady determined to go thither, and the *Magdalen* followed her. As they passed along the town many devout persons of both sexes met her, and consoled with her, crying out aloud against the apprehensive injustice done to her divine Son, as they led her on to the hostile wilderness.

she was repairing. When she arrived at the place where she was to remain, turning to her attendants, she returned them thanks, and they submissively bowing, paid her homage and condolence. Our Lady was followed by her two sisters and the *Magdalen* into the house; after which St. *John* placing himself at the door, and returning thanks to the rest, and making some excuses for not inviting them in on account of the lateness of the evening, and the melancholly situation of the afflicted Virgin, he dismissed them. But with disconsolate eyes did this childless Mother look round the house, where she could no more see the object of all her delight. 'O fair and beauteous, O lovely O Son! where art thou now? O *John*! where is my only Son? O *Magdalen*! where is thy Master, that more than parent, who loved thee so tenderly? O beloved sisters! where is my *Jesus*? Every joy is now fled from me; every sweetness, every pleasing sight vanishes from my eyes, now he is no more before me. Alas, alas, what agonies he suffered! Alas, how my grief augments whenever I look back to behold him all torn, all bruised, all disfigured, sighing, panting, and fainting with thirst, anguish, and violence! What insults, what torments, and what taunts did he go through!

through! And I, oh me! wished in vain to comfort him. His foes inhumanly abused him; his friends meanly and shamefully forsook him; his poor, his tender Mother, wanted power to help him; and his Father, his Almighty Father, would not rescue him: And with what expedition was he not hurried to the cruel, inhumanly cruel, unnaturally cruel slaughter! What wretch so vile was ever condemned, and executed with so much injustice, barbarity and precipitation, as my poor innocent, inoffensive Son *Jesus*? Oh my Son *Jesus*! in this last one unhappiest of nights wast thou basely betrayed, inhumanly seized, perfidiously condemned, and now cruelly crucified, thou liest unjustly murdered! O dearest *Jesus*! how bitter is this separation from thee; and how insupportable the sad reflection on thy undeserved, ignominious death! Thus went on this tender, this afflicted Mother, till St. *John* at length besought her to desist from her excess of grief, and administered comfort to her. Do you, amidst your pious contemplation, wish to do the like, devout reader; obey her, minister to her, and attend and comfort her, and join with St. *John* in preparing something for her reflection, and for those who are

A A A 2

are with her, who are all fasting and faint:
And when you have indulged yourself a
while in this pious, spiritual officiousness,
procure the Virgin's blessing, and depart.

C H A P. LXX.

*Meditation on our blessed Lady's conversation
with her devout companions.*

ON the morning of the Sabbath, they all
remained in the house with the doors
shut, extremely afflicted, and mourning
like orphans for the loss of a tender parent,
without uttering a syllable, but looking de-
jectedly on each other, as is usual on occa-
sions of extreme grief, and supply their
want of words with abundant sighs. While
thus they sit distressful, a sudden knocking
at the door alarms and dismays them; for
all courage is flown from them. But John
going to the door, finds it to be Peter, and
removes the fears of the company, by ac-
quainting them with it. Peter, with the
sacred Virgin's leave, being admitted, full
of confusion, anguish and repentance, ap-
proaches, but without being able to utter a
word. After him came, one by one, the
rest

rest of the Disciples, weeping and abashed. At length, when their tears and sighs are abated, they begin to talk of their dear deceased Lord. O how I blush from my soul, says *Peter*, and how well my confused conscience tells me that am unworthy to speak in your presence, sacred Lady, or even to be seen by mankind, after having so shamefully denied and forsaken my divine Master who loved me to so great a degree! In like manner all the other Disciples, with tears, knocking their breasts, and deep sorrow, accused themselves for having abandoned their Lord in his Passion. But the gracious Virgin Mother consoled them all, saying, 'Alas, my children, your and my bountiful Master and faithful Shepherd has now departed from us for a while, and left us like orphans without a parent. However, I finally trust to his goodness, that he will soon be with us again. And you know how good and indulgent he is, and how much he loves you all. Despair not then, but confidently rely on his goodness for your reconciliation, and depend on his pardon for every fault and offence you have hitherto committed against him. For he knows full well the frailty of your nature, and the greatness of the temptation. By his Almighty Father's permission, such

was

was the fury and outrage of his merciless enemies, that your staying with him could not have been of service to him: Therefore, be not discouraged. Truly, O benign Lady, (says Peter,) thus far what you say I hope will in some measure alleviate my offence. It was the very fury you speak of which so terrified me as to make me think myself in danger of falling a victim to it; and that terror it was which made me so shamefully deny my Lord. Nor did I at the instant reflect on the word by which he foretold this denial. The Magdalen then enquiring concerning this prediction of our Lord, Peter told her the circumstances of it, and added, that our Lord told them many things at his Last Supper. Upon which, our blessed Lady desiring to be informed of all the particulars of what her divine Son had done and said on that occasion, Peter made a sign to John, and John related the whole particulars. And then, as well concerning this as other occasions, they related among themselves, sometimes one and sometimes another, several things which Christ had taught and practised amongst them: And thus they passed the whole day in talking of him. O how attentively did the Magdalen, and much more our blessed Lady, listen to all this. O how often

often did she that day cry out, 'Blessed for ever be my holy Son *Jesus*!' Behold then diligently, and compassionate them in the extreme affliction which this day overwhelms them. For what a sight was it to behold the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Princess of the holy Church, and the Directors of *Christ's* people, seized with so great sorrow, and forced to abscond themselves in that little house, not knowing what to do, having nothing to comfort them but only to communicate together and repeat the former sayings and actions of their divine Lord and Master *Jesus*. Our blessed Lady, however, remained with a peaceful and serene mind, being always firm and constant in the certain hopes of her Son's Resurrection, in which hopes she persisted the whole Sabbath, for which reason the Sabbath is a day specially dedicated by the Church to her. Her comfort however was not wholly free from grief whenever she thought on the bitter death and sufferings of her blessed Son.

Now when the sun was gone down, and it was lawful for them to work, *Mary Magdalen*, and the other *Mary* that was with her, went out to buy certain sweet spices to make ointments to anoint the body of *Jesus*. For the night before, after they came from the Sepulchre, they began to make things ready for

JESUS CHRIST. 39

C H A P. LXXI.

Our Lord Jesus descends into the Limbo of the Fathers.

WE are now to consider what our blessed Lord did on this day of the Sabbath. You are to know then, that as soon as he expired, his blessed soul descended into that part of Hell called *Limbo*, where the souls of the Fathers were detained; and there he remained with them. During which time, they were in possession of Glory; for the Vision of God is the perfect Glory of the Blessed. Oh how great was his bounty; how great his love; and how great his humility! He could if he had pleased have delivered his servants by the means of an angelical messenger, who might have conducted them to his presence in whatever place he had chosen: but this his infinite love and humility would not suffer him to do. Wherefore he himself descended; and though Lord of all, visited them not as servants, but as intimate and familiar friends, and remained with them till near break of day the Sunday following. Think well on this, and endeavour to copy after so great a pattern.

At which time **Bbb** *led them glorious* **The**

The holy Fathers were in extacy of immense joy at the approach of their Redeemer: All anxiety then gave place to ineffable delight; and their petitions and solicitations for a speedy deliverance from this state of captivity, were changed into praises and thanksgiving for the inexpressible benefit of their present redemption. When therefore the soul of *Jesus* advanced towards them, imagine you see the holy tribe assembled together, hasting with transports of earnest alacrity to meet him, and crying out to him, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has visited and wrought the redemption of his people." "Rise up your drooping heads, O afflicted fellow captives, for behold your redemption is coming." "Rise up, rise up, O *Jerusalem*, break the chain from off your neck; behold the Saviour comes to ransom us from our fetters." "Lift up your gates, O princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." "We adore you, O *Christ*, and we bless you, our most loving God." And thus falling down they adored him with unpeakable joy and gratitude. Thus did they continue in lauds and thanksgiving before our Lord till the dawn of the third day: At which time our Lord, heading this happy tribe, led them glorious and

and triumphant, from that subterraneous place of their captivity, to that earthly Paradise of delights, where those glorious Prophets of God *Elias* and *Enoch* are waiting the coming of Antichrist, whom they are appointed to oppose. Here our blessed Redeemer staid sometime with them; and here they still persisted, in conjunction with those two venerable men, in praising, thanksgiving, and glorifying their all-gracious Benefactor. At length our Saviour told them, that it was time for him to leave them, and to depart to resume his sacred body, by a glorious Resurrection. Go then, (say they)

O divine, O bounteous Redeemer, O King of Glory, compleat the merciful work you have so graciously begun, and so divinely carried on; but oh, vouchsafe speedily to return to us, that our joy be redoubled in the desirable sight of your sacred body, which we have so long and so earnestly yearned and sighed after.

You see then, O devout reader, that you need not want matter of pious meditation during the interval between our Lord's Death and Resurrection. Hitherto I have made but few and short meditations on the Passion of *Christ*, that the mind might not be taken off from attending to the series of his sufferings. But now it will not be im-

proper to make some serious reflections upon
 seeing it. What think you, O Christian, can
 you owe any thing less than your whole life
 to Christ, who generously laid down his
 precious life for you, and bore the most
 excruciating torments himself, to free you
 from bearing them to all eternity. Were
 the lives of all the sons of Adam, the dura-
 tion of the angels, and the worth of the
 whole creation, to be united in one living
 creature, yet would such a creature be no
 thing in comparison with that beautiful stu-
 pendous body of his. Were all the excel-
 lent talents of every animated Being to be
 centered in one, what would they be to the
 superior virtues assembled in his conception
 from the Holy Ghost, in his birth from a
 Virgin, in the innocence of his life, in the
 elegance of his doctrine, in the brilliancy of
 his miracles, in the revelation of his sacra-
 ments and mysteries? Were all the tor-
 ments which nature can suffer to be inflicted
 on one Being, yet would they be nothing
 in value to what he went through in the se-
 ries of his Life, Passion, and Death. The
 Heavens then are not so high exalted above
 the earth as his ways are above ours, and
 his life above our life. Nay, nothing, un-
 existing nothing, bears a nearer proportion
 to something, than our life does to his. No
 thing

thing can be more excellent than this, and
 thing is more miserable than that. Our life
 is all corruption, this life, purity itself. Ours
 of no worth, his of infinite value. And
 yet he grudged not to lay down that pre-
 cious life, to save us from eternal death.
 O excess of goodness! When therefore we
 have devoted to him our life, and all that
 is valuable in it, we fall still as short of what
 he has done for us, and our offering is no
 more to be compared to his, than the twink-
 ling light of the remotest star to the lustre
 of the sun, the least drop of water to a great
 river, a pebble to an enormous mountain,
 or a grain of wheat to a summer's harvest.
 It was not of trivial matters that this blessed
 Redeemer stripped himself for you. He low-
 ered himself, and that not a little, to exalt
 you: He lowered himself to flesh, he lowered
 himself to death, and the death of the cross.
 O who can express this excess of humility,
 meekness, and condescension, in the God of
 Majesty's deigning to put on the flesh, to
 be punished with death, to be disgraced with
 a cross? Perhaps it may be asked: but could
 not the Creator have repaired the work of
 his own hands, without all this difficulty?
 Doubtless, he could; but he chose to do
 otherwise, though to his own cost, that the
 base and detestable crime of ingratitude
 might no more take root in the heart of
 man.

man. He suffered therefore, an immensity of labour and hardships, to provoke man to pay him the just debt of immensity of love; and to move him, whom the facility of his creation had rendered ungrateful and indolent, to be grateful and earnest in thanksgiving for his redemption, which was wrought with so much difficulty. How did ungrateful man reason upon his creation? I was made indeed out of nothing, gratis; but I was made without any expence or labour to my Maker; he said, and I was made like all other Beings. But now, 'the mouth of them that speak lies was stopped.' And now, O man, the immense cost which God has been at in redeeming you, is as apparent as the noon-day sun. Your Redeemer to ransom you, disdained not becoming from a sovereign Lord an humble servant, from infinitely rich, extremely poor, from the immortal word, mortal flesh, from the Son of God, the Son of man.

Consider yourself rightly then, and remember that if you was made of nothing, you was not redeemed with nothing. In six days God created all things, and you among the rest: But he was three and thirty years upon earth, labouring and working your redemption. O how hard did he toil, bearing the necessities of the flesh, the anxieties

ties and tribulations of the spirit, and all the severe trials his enemies could put him to? Did he not heap to himself all the horrors of death, and aggravate those horrors with the ignominy of the cross?

O how amiable, lovely *Jesus*, how amiable to me above things does thy chalice render thee! that chalice, that bitter, bitter draught which thou vouchsafedst to drink for our redemption! This, this demands, and justly demands all our affection: this alone, ought to engross all our love: this alone, should suffice sweetly to attract, justly to win, closely to knit, and forcibly to captivate us to thee. You see then, pious reader, that the Author of Nature was at no expence in the fabric of the world in comparison of what it cost the Redeemer of Nature to restore it. He spoke but, and the former was made, he but gave his orders, and it was created. But in the latter, his words were contradicted, his actions reprimanded, he was insulted with torments, was punished with death, and reviled with the cross.

It was the height of infinite goodness in *Christ* to deliver up his life a prey to death for us; and to pay down from out of his own sacred side the full ransom due to his eternal Father. In this, how truly did he fulfil what the Psalmist sung of him.

“ the

"the Lord is mercy, and with him plenty
 to full redemption?" Plentiful indeed, was
 this redemption, to effect which, he poured
 forth not a single drop, nor from one part
 of his body, but seas of blood from five se-
 veral parts, besides a river from every pore.
 Think then, O man, on the greatness of your
 obligation; think on the debt of love you
 owe him. What is it he should have done
 and has not done for you? He has enlighte-
 ned you, when blind; unbound you,
 when in chains; set you right, when astray;
 and reconciled you, when guilty. Who
 then can forbear running willingly and
 eagerly after him who delivers us from
 error, and winks at our frailties, who gives
 us living, the means to merit, and bestows
 on us in death, the reward of the merit he
 gives? What excuse can any one plead for
 not running after the fragrant odour of his
 ointment. Not surely that the fragrantcy of
 it did not reach him? The odour of his
 sweet-scented life has gone through the
 whole earth. For the whole earth is full of
 his mercy, and the effects of his mercy sur-
 pass all his other works. He therefore who
 is insensible to, or follows not, this fragrant
 odour, is totally dead, or totally corrupted.
 The holy Spouse in the Canticles is not
 ashamed of the blackness she borrowed from
 her

her spouse, whom to be like, is the sum-
 mit of true glory. There is nothing more
 glorious than to put on the blackness of re-
 proach which Christ himself put on. Hence
 says the Apostle with salutary transport:
 Far be it from me to glory in any thing
 but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 How dear ought the ignominy of the cross
 to be to all those who are so happy as not to
 be at variance with him who suffered on it
 for our sakes? There is a blackness in it, we
 must own; but that blackness is beautiful
 inasmuch as it was the form and likeness of
 our Lord. Whom else did *Isaiah*, in spirit,
 call the man of sorrows, knowing infirmity,
 who had neither form nor comeliness.
 Him, says he, we esteemed stricken, smitten
 of God, and humbled. But he was wound-
 ed for our transgressions, he was bruised
 for our iniquities, and with his stripes we
 are healed.

What, fellow Christians! Did Christ take
 upon him the shame of sin for our sakes, and
 shall we be ashamed of being villified or repu-
 ted black for his sake? Look attentively on
 this villified Saviour, disfigured in dress and
 mock garments, defaced with bloody wounds,
 defiled with nauseous spittle, mortified with
 blows, and pale with death. What more
 deformed, or blackened could strike the eyes

of his beholders, than he, when, with his arms wide extended on the cross, he afforded laughter to his inveterate enemies, tears to the faithful, and agony to convulsed nature, when he, alone, was a subject of mockery and sport, who alone, was worthy to command respect, and able to inflict terror through the whole universe?

Meditate, therefore, O pious reader, the sufferings of that sacred, crucified body, and see if there is any thing there, which does not plead for you to the eternal Father. For you it is that that divine head is pierced with innumerable thorns. 'My people, (says the Lord by his Prophet,) have covered me all over with the thorns of their sins.' Lest your head should ach, lest your intentions should be wounded, his eyes were closed by death, and the luminaries of the world were at that instant extinct. At the darkening of his sacred eyes, those great lights were eclipsed with the rest, and universal darkness overshadowed the whole earth. And why all this, but that your eyes might be averted from beholding vanity, or being attracted by it.

Those blessed ears which perpetually hear in Heaven, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath; heard upon earth, thou hast a devil, crucify him, crucify him.' And all,

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all, that your ears might be deaf no longer to the voice of God, or to the cries of the poor: but deaf to detraction, deaf to discourses injurious to God or detrimental to your brother, and deaf to every vain and unprofitable sound.

That divinely beauteous face, the most comely of all among the sons of men, was defiled with spittle, disfigured with bruises, profaned with dirt, and set to scorn, that your face might be made fair and shining; and, become confident in goodness, might not turn to opposite extremes.

That blessed mouth which directed angels and instructed men in heavenly knowledge, which but spoke and all things were done according to his will, was plied with vinegar and gall; and why? but that your mouth and heart might thenceforth be enabled to relish the sweets of truth, and confess your God.

Those heavenly hands, which molded the Earth and Heavens, were barbarously stretched with nails on the cross. Why did your guiltless Saviour submit to this, but to purchase you the grace of keeping your hands ever open to the relief of the needy and distressed; and to qualify you to say with the Psalmist: 'My soul is always in my hands! What we carry in our hands we

cannot easily forget, and thus he, who has his soul forever in his hands by his indefatigable industry in good works, cannot be mindless of it.

Those sacred feet whose footstool we ought to adore, because it is holy, were inhumanly transfix'd with nails, that your feet might not hurry to evil, but run on in the way of the commandments of your God. 'They have pierced my feet, (says the Prophet in the person of *Christ*,) they have numbered all my bones.' For you he sacrificed his flesh and his life, to purchase your body and soul; and thus he ransomed all you are, with all he is himself.

Rouse yourself up then, my soul, and, shaking off your dust, contemplate this memorable this incomparable man, this Man-God, whom you see before you in the transparent chrystal of the holy Gospel. Consider, my soul, who is this, who proceeds with the majestic air of a monarch, though covered with the ignominy of a despicable slave? He moves with a crown on his head, but his diadem is an instrument of torments, and his sacred temples are transfix'd with innumerable wounds from it. He is deck'd in royal robes, but they are to him badges of scorn instead of honour. He waves a sceptre in his hand, not to command others, but

to

to be struck with it himself. He is adored with bended knees, proclaimed a King, and receives the homages of a numerous multitude, but they are marks of contempt instead of duty and fidelity. His lovely visage is spit upon, his beautiful cheeks are buffeted, and his honourable neck bends under dishonour.

Behold, my soul, how this sacred man of sorrows, is abused and reviled. He is commanded, all faint and sinking beneath his stripes, to bend his sacred shoulders under the heavy load of the cross, and to bear his ignominy to the place of execution. He is raised on the cross, he is insulted and scoffed at there, and admitted no other comfort than a draught of vinegar mixed with gall. And in return for all this usage, he only says, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." What a stupendous one is this, who, amidst all his torments and ill-usage, never once opened his mouth to complain of, accuse, threaten, or curse the accursed brutes, who are busied in doing him such cruel injustice! But, after all their ill-treatment of him, breaks forth into such terms of blessing as have no example. What instance of meekness, patience and goodness, can we produce like him?

But look, my soul, yet a little higher, and see how worthy he is to engross all your admiration and pity. Behold him naked, and torn with stripes, suspended by iron nails on an ignominious cross between two thieves, plied with vinegar and gall, persecuted to death, nay even beyond death, with a lance which rips open his sacred side. And view him thus pouring forth five rivers of precious blood, from his hands, feet, and sides! Open, open your sluices, my eyes, and thou, O my soul, melt into tenderness, dissolve into pity for this most lovely of the sons of men, whom thou seest amidst all this meekness oppressed with every injurious treatment.

O look down, Lord, eternal Father! look down from your sanctuary above, and behold this sacred offering which our High Priest, your holy Son *Jesus Christ*, offers to you for the sins of us his brethren, and be propitious to the multitude of our iniquities and greatness of our malice. Behold, the blood of our brother *Jesus* crying out to you from the cross, 'Behold I am crowned with glory and honour.' Earnest he stands soliciting at your right-hand for us; for he is our flesh and our brother.

Look, O Lord, on the countenance of *Christ* thy Son, who is become obedient to thee

thee even to death, and let not the marks of his wounds be ever from before thy eyes, that thou mayest always remember the satisfaction he has made to thee for our sins. Would, O Lord, that the sins by which we have deserved thy indignation, were placed in a ballance with the calamity which thy most innocent Son *Jesus* suffered for us! May every tongue return thee thanks, O Lord, for thy great goodness to us, who sparedst not thy only Son, but deliveredst him to death for us, to the end we might have so great, so true an advocate with thee in Heaven! And to thee, O blessed *Jesus*, what acts of thanksgiving, or what retribution worthy thy acceptance can I make, who am dust and ashes—a vile compound of clay? For what was there wanting for my salvation which thou hast not done? From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, thou wast wholly plunged in the waters of suffering and affliction, to extract me out of the same. The waters have entered even to thy blessed soul. Thy soul was separated by death, that thou might restore me mine, which I had lost. Wherefore thou hast bound me to thee by a double debt, that is, by what thou hast bestowed upon me, and by what thou hast lost for my sake. I am indebted to thee for my life, which
twice

twice thou hast given me; once in my creation, and once in my redemption. Wherefore I have nothing to offer thee which more justly is thy due, than my life itself. I cannot find what recompence man can make thee, O *Christ*, for thy precious soul, which was so much troubled and burdened with affliction. For were the Heavens, the earth, and all the beauties belonging to them, in my power, they would all fall short of the greatness of the debt I owe thee. It is thy gift, O Lord, that I even make thee any part of that return which I owe thee. I ought to love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength; and to follow thy example, who vouchsafedst to die for me: And how shall I be able to do this but by thy help? My soul shall follow close after thee, because her whole strength depends on thee!

Thus far *St. Bernard*. But let us now proceed to the Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus*.

C H A P.

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My soul shall follow close after thee, because
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Thus far we have proceeded. But let us now
proceed to the Redemption of our Lord

Jesus



THE RESURRECTION

C H A P. LXXII.

*The glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus,
and his appearing first to his blessed Mother.*

EARLY on the Sunday morning, before the break of day, the soul of our blessed Jesus, accompanied by a glorious tribe of blessed Spirits, returned again to the Sepulchre where his body lay: And re-assuming the same, he arose by virtue of his sacred divinity, and miraculously went out of the grave, without opening it. And about the same time, Mary Magdalen, Mary of James, and Mary of Salome, taking leave of our blessed Lady, set out towards the Sepulchre of our Lord; taking with them many precious ointments which they had prepared for that purpose. The blessed Virgin in the mean time remained at home, fixed in devout prayer; which we may piously imagine she made, in the manner following: ' Most
' merciful Father, full of clemency and
' pity, you know that my most beloved and
' blessed Son is now dead and buried; and
' that he was first cruelly fixed to a disgrace-
' ful cross between two thieves; and that
' after he had resigned his blessed soul to
' you, I myself helped to place in the Se-
D d d ' pulchre

pulchre his sacred body, which I conceived without blemish, and bore without pain. Thou knowest, O Lord, he was all the good I possessed, all I could desire, and the only comfort and life of my soul. But at length he was suddenly snatched from me, being full of sorrow, full of wounds, rent and scourged, and by his cruel enemies shamefully abused, and condemned to death; so that he was forsaken by his Disciples, who fled from him; and I, his disconsolate and afflicted Mother, could noways help him. But now, O Father of Mercy, though at that time it pleased thee not to deliver him from that cruel and bitter Passion, yet, as thy holy will is now fully accomplished, and it is in thy power to restore him again safely to me, I beseech thy divine Majesty to do it. Why does he tarry so long from me? Send him speedily to me, O most bountiful Father, for my soul can have no peace till I behold him. Oh my most sweet Son *Jesus*, where art thou now? What art thou doing? And why dost thou stay so long before thou comest to relieve me? Make no longer delay, I beseech thee, but come: for thou thyself saidst, that thou wouldst rise the third day; and is not this the third day? Rise therefore,

' therefore, my Beloved, my Joy, and comfort me with thy presence, whom thou hast so much afflicted with thy absence.'

As our Lady was thus praying, and bathing herself in floods of tears which flowed from her lovely eyes, our blessed Lord appeared suddenly to her, and stood before her in white, and with pleasing and lovely aspect solaced her, saying, "Hail, holy Parent." And she surprized with sudden joy, said, 'Art thou my blessed Son Jesus?' And bowing down, she adored him. And he again to her; 'It is I, my beloved Mother; I am risen again from death, and am now present with you. My sorrows are ceased; I have triumphed over death, and have overcome all my pain and anguish, so that they can never more have any power over me.' To whom she answered, 'Blessed be thy omnipotent and eternal Father, who has comforted me again with thy presence; may his holy name be exalted, magnified, and praised forever.' Thus lovingly conversing together, our Lord Jesus related to her the things he had wrought in those three days after his Passion, and how he delivered the Fathers from the prison in which they were confined. Wherefore this is a sovereign

D d d 2

Pascha,

Resurrection, this the joyful day of which the royal Prophet spoke, saying, *This is the day which our Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad therein.*

CHAP. LXXIII.

The coming of the three Marys to the Monument, and the race between Peter and John.

THE *Magdalen*, as we have said before, in company with the two *Marys*, went to the Monument with the ointments. When they came to the entrance of the Sepulchre, they were in a kind of concern how they should get in; *Who will roll away the stone for us from the Monument?* say they. But no sooner had they said it, than looking up they saw the stone removed, and an angel sitting upon it, who said to them, *Be not afraid.* They however, disappointed of their hopes, by not finding the body of our Lord, gave little attention to the angel; but running back affrighted, told the Disciples that our Lord's body was taken away. Upon which, *Peter* and *John* immediately arose, and ran to the Monument with zeal and anxiety, and the *Marys* after them. When they came thither, they found

found not the body, but only the winding-sheet and other linnen it was wrapt in. Wherefore they returned back immediately with their eyes bathed in tears, and their hearts rending with affliction. They sought their Lord, but could not find him, nor knew they now where or which way to seek him. Compassionate them then, pious reader, in so great an affliction.

C H A P. LXXIV.

Our Lord's appearing to the three Marys.

THE Marys however remained there, and looking towards the Monument, saw two angels standing in white, who said to them, 'Whom do you seek? Do you seek, one living, among the dead?' But they gave no attention to the angels, nor received any comfort from this vision. For they came not to seek angels, but the Lord of angels. Two of the Marys therefore, lost and absorbed in affliction, withdrew to a little distance from the Monument, and sat down to sooth their grief. While the *Magdalen*, at a loss what to do, and unable to live without her divine Master, sat sadly pensive and weeping at the mouth of the Sepulchre;

Sepulchre; where again she saw the same
 angels, who again asked her, "Woman,
 why do you weep? Whom do you seek?"
 "They have taken away my Lord, (said she)
 and I know not where they have laid him."
 O wonderful operation of love! One angel
 had told her he was risen; and two others
 had assured her, he was alive; and yet so
 forgetful is she as to say, *I know not*. Love,
 divine love, was the cause of this self-obliv-
 ion in the *Magdalen*. For as *Origen* says
 on this passage, her soul was not with *her*,
 but with her divine Master. Hence she *knew*
not; that is, she knew neither how to hear,
 remember, nor think without him. Where-
 fore while thus she continued weeping, dis-
 consolate, and regardless of all the angel
 said to her, her divine Master, overcome as
 it were by her excess of love, appeared to
 her to console her, and said, "Woman,
 whom seek you? Why do you weep?"
 At first she knew him not, but inebriated
 with affection, answered him, "Lord, if
 you have taken my Lord away, tell me
 where you have put him." Think then
 you see this glorious woman with her face
 bathed in a flood of tears, beseeching, and
 with every moving remonstrance earnestly
 conjuring him to tell her, where she may
 find the beloved object she was in search of:
 for

For still she hoped to hear some glad tidings of him. How grateful a sight was this to *Christ!* He therefore again said to her, "*Mary!*" When immediately coming as it were to herself, and knowing him by his voice, she cried out in a transport of unutterable joy, "Rabbi!" that is, Master! "Ah, you are the sweet, the adorable Lord I was seeking with so much eagerness!" Then rising, she ran to have embraced his feet. But our Lord, to raise her mind to a more celestial affection, and wean her from his earthly presence, said to her, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father." After they had a while conversed in a celestial manner with each other, our Lord gave her his blessing, and departed; when she, full of joy and spiritual comfort, went to her companions, and told them the gladsome news. They were exceedingly overjoyed at the tidings of our Lord's Resurrection: but when they found they were not blessed with a sight of him, they departed homewards with grief and dejection. But as the above-mentioned three *Marys* were proceeding on their way, before they came to the city, the benign *Jesus* vouchsafed to appear to them, saying, "Hail!" No sooner did they hear and

and see him, than seized with a joy beyond the power of words to express, they fall on their faces and adored him. Here again our Lord vouchsafed to enter into a gracious and ineffable conversation with them for some time, concerning his sublime mysteries. After which he said to them; 'Bid my brethren come to me in Galilee, there they will see me as I foretold them.' Admire here the great humility of our Lord Jesus in calling his poor lowly Disciples his brethren. This you see is a virtue, which Christ laid not aside even after his Resurrection. Meditate then devoutly on those edifying subjects. And, if you are desirous of reaping full advantage from the contemplation of them, endeavour to be as present in spirit, as these holy persons were in body.

C H A P. LXXV.

Our Lord's appearing to Joseph, to James the Less, and to Peter.

OUR Lord Jesus, after departing from the Marys, appeared to Joseph of Arimathea, who had buried him, visiting him in prison. For the Jews had seized him and

and confined him in a goal, with an intent to put him to death after the Sabbath. Our Lord therefore appeared to him, and wiping off the tears and damp from his face, led him out, the doors unopened, as ancient pious tradition informs us. He also appeared to *James the Less*, who had vowed never to taste any nouriture, till he should see our Lord risen from the dead. To him therefore, and to those who were with him, he commanded that they should spread the table, then taking bread and blessing it, he gave to him, saying, 'Eat, my beloved brother; for the son of man is risen from the dead.' [See St. Jerome, on Ecclesiastical writers. Tom. I.]

When the *Marys* returned home and acquainted the Disciples with the Resurrection of *Christ*, *Peter*, extremely afflicted that he had not seen his Lord, and unable, through excess of love, to rest without seeing him, arose immediately and went alone to the Sepulchre, not knowing where else so speedily to find him. While therefore he was proceeding on his way, *Jesus* appeared to him, and said, 'Peace be to you *Simon Peter*.' Then *Peter*, striking his breast, and prostrating himself on the ground, in a flood of tears, cried out, 'O Lord! O dearest Saviour! I have sinned against thee;
E e e

‘ thee ; I acknowledge my crime in leaving thee in thy distress, and shamefully denying thee thrice.’ And when his love and grief stopped his words, he embraced his Master’s holy feet, and tenderly kissed them. Our Lord then raised him, and embracing him, said again : ‘ Peace to thee, *Simon-Peter* ; fear not, thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy denial I foresaw and foretold thee, and now I forgive thee. Go and confirm thy brethren in the belief of my Resurrection. And be confident thyself, that I have conquered for thee all thy enemies, and even death itself.’ Thus a while they stood solemnizing a glorious *Pascha* in heavenly conversation. After which *Peter* returned to our blessed Lady and the Disciples, and related to them all he had seen and heard. In the Gospel there is no mention made of our Lord’s appearing to his sacred Mother. I have however taken notice of it, first, because the Church seems to countenance my doing so, as may appear more plainly in the legend on the Resurrection.

CHAP. P.

C H A P. LXXXVI.

Christ's return to the holy Fathers after his Resurrection.

OUR Lord Jesus not having yet visited the holy Fathers after his Resurrection; as soon as he departed from Peter, took a numerous retinue of angels, and went to visit them. When the venerable tribe saw him coming towards them, they went to meet him with excessive transports of spiritual joy, singing, Behold our King comes: let us meet our Saviour! Our mighty beginning, and his kingdom, shall have no end! This is a blissful day that shines forth to us! Come all, and obey the Lord. Then prostrating themselves, they adored him; and rising, continued singing with reverence, fervor and joy, his praises, saying, Thou hast risen our glory: We will be glad, and rejoice in thee. Thy kingdom is of all ages; and thy dominion shall last from generation to generation. We depart not from you; and you shall raise us, and we will magnify your holy name. Our Leader is come forth; made a High Priest forever. This, this is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice thereon. The day of redemption

E e e 2

' redemption has shone forth to us, of ancient
 ' reparation, and of eternal felicity. This
 ' day throughout the Universe the Heavens
 ' distil honey: because the Lord has reigned
 ' from a tree. The Lord has reigned, the
 ' Lord has put on comeliness, he has put
 ' on strength, and girded himself. Sing to
 ' him a new song, for he has wrought won-
 ' ders. His right hand and his holy arm
 ' hath saved us to himself. For we are his
 ' people, and the sheep of his pasture.
 ' Come let us adore him.' When the eve-
 ' ning drew nigh, *Jesus* acquainted them with
 ' his design of going again to visit his poor
 ' afflicted brethren, who, after his death, were
 ' dispersed like sheep having no shepherd, and
 ' were seeking him with utmost anxiety. *I*
 ' will return therefore (says he) to them,
 ' that I may console and strengthen them,
 ' and will soon come back to release you.
 ' Then the holy Fathers, prostrating them-
 ' selves again, adored him, saying, Go,
 ' Lord *Jesus*, blessed be thy holy name,
 ' and be all things done according to thy
 ' divine word and will.'

CHAPTER

CHAP. LXXVII.

Christ's appearing to the two Disciples going to Emaus.

AS two Disciples were walking together towards the little town of *Emaus*, talking of what had happened in a melancholly manner, and in a kind of despondency about him; our Lord *Jesus* came up to them, and in the form of a traveller joined in conversation with them; interrogating, answering them, and giving them salutary maxims, as the Gospel relates. At length, suffering himself to be forced by them, he went in with them, and manifested himself to them. Here, pious reader, contemplate the goodness of *Christ*. For, First, such is his ardent love for his Disciples, that he cannot suffer them long to wander in uncertainty and affliction. Like a faithful friend, a trusty companion, and an affable Lord, he joins with them, enquires the cause of their affliction, and exposes the Scriptures to them in such a manner as to cleanse their hearts from all rust of earthly affections, and influence them with divine love. Thus does he daily behave towards us in a spiritual manner. If overcome by any

any afflictions, perplexities, or languor of soul, we talk of him, he is immediately with us, comforting, enlightening, and inflaming our hearts with his love. Of such excellent advantage is it to us to talk of God in our adversities or tribulation. Hence says the Prophet, "How sweet are thy words to my taste; sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb." And again, "My heart waxed hot within me, and fire burns in my meditation." Secondly, Behold the goodness of our Lord in feigning that he was going farther, in order to increase their desire of his stay with them, and to induce them to invite and detain him. How gracious was it in him to go with them, to break bread with them, to bless that bread with his sacred hands for them, and afterwards to reveal himself to them! Does he not do the same towards us all as often as we apply to prayer and meditation? Thus then does it behove us to pray without ceasing.

CHAP. 1.
OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST
IN THE WORLD
AND HIS
MEDITATION
ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES
AND HIS
PRAYER
IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE
AND HIS
SWEAT
AND BLOOD
AND HIS
DEATH
ON THE CROSS
AND HIS
BURIAL
AND HIS
RESURRECTION
AND HIS
ASCENSION
AND HIS
SECOND COMING
AND HIS
JUDGMENT
AND HIS
GLORY

C H A P. LXXXVIII.

Our Lord appears to the Disciples, who were shut up on the day of the Resurrection.

THE two Disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem, and finding the other Disciples, except Thomas, assembled together, they related to them what had happened to them, where they likewise heard in their turn, a confirmation of our Lord's being risen, and having appeared to Simon. During this conversation, our Lord Jesus himself came into the room, the doors being shut, and saluted them all, saying, "Peace be with you." The Disciples seeing our Lord, fell on their faces, and acknowledging their fault in having fled at his Passion, they received him with great alacrity. Our Lord then comforted them, saying, "Rise, brethren, your sins are forgiven you." After which he stood familiarly amongst them, shewing them the prints of his sacred wounds. Mean time the table being spread by his order, he then sat down, and eat part of a fish and some honey which was set before him. Then he breathed upon them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." O how

how full of joy and spiritual delight was this interview!

Imagine too, you see here our blessed Lady, for it was to her that the Disciples flocked when they assembled together after the death of our Lord. O with what inexpressible joy is she not filled at the sight of her glorious and triumphant Son in the midst of his Disciples, and how studious, how pleased, and how devoutly transported is she in doing little offices of reverence and love towards him! And how willing is our Lord to add to her delight by accepting little services from her, and making her returns of honour and affection before his Disciples. Forget not, likewise, to cast an eye of devotion towards the *Magdalen*, that favourite among the Disciples, that kind of female Apostle among the Apostles. Fancy you see her as usual, sitting at the feet of her divine Master, absorbed in attention to his words, and transported with joy whenever she has an opportunity of ministering to him. O how heavenly must this mansion be, and what a blessing to be in it at this delicious moment! O this was a true *Pascha*! Who must not joy to be at it? And what delight must you not partake in contemplating it? But perhaps you are present at it, without being affected by it.

Though

Though if you was truly attentive to the Passion, and contemplated it with a sincere fellow-feeling of the sufferings of *Christ* of his Mother, and of his Disciples, you cannot but now partake in the joys of their *Pascha*. The same joys you might renew on every Sunday, if you were careful likewise to renew on the preceeding Friday and Saturday the devout memorial of his Passion. For, as *St. Paul* says, "If you are partakers of his Passions, so shall you be of his comforts."

C H A P. LXXIX.

Our Lord's appearing to the Disciples on the Octave of Easter, when St. Thomas was with them.

A GAIN on the eighth day after his Resurrection, our Lord *Jesus* appeared to his Disciples, the doors being shut. And now *Thomas*, who the time before was not of their company, was present with them. To whom, when they gave him an account of *Christ's* having vouchsafed them a visit, he answered, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in

his side, I will not believe. *Christ* then, the good shepherd, solicitous for his little flock, in compassion to the frailty of this his beloved Disciple, stands before them all, and graciously salutes them with, 'Peace be with you.' Then addressing himself to *Thomas*, 'Reach hither your finger, (said he) and behold my hands: Stretch forth your hand and put it to my side, and be not incredulous, but faithful.' Then *Thomas*, after having touched the wounds of *Jesus*, falling on his face, said, 'My Lord and my God!' Thus making reparation for his former unbelief. For now, though he saw but the humanity of our Lord, he confessed his Godhead. After this he joined with his Fellow-Disciples in acknowledging the fault of forsaking so divine a Master at the time of his Passion. But our Lord *Jesus* graciously raised him up, bid him be of courage, and mercifully forgave him all former faults. It was doubtless by special dispensation of Heaven that *Thomas* was permitted to hesitate in faith, that *Christ's* Resurrection might more evidently appear. How glorious does the bounty and condescension of this sweet Saviour shine towards his weak Disciples, and particularly to *Thomas*, in shewing to them his sacred wounds, to remove from their souls every cloud of doubt,

donbt, for their and our advantage! Three
 great ends he proposed to himself in pre-
 serving the prints of his sacred wounds,
 that by them he might confirm his Apostles
 and Faithful in the faith of his Resurrection;
 that while he was acting the office of our
 Mediator with his divine Father, he might
 the more easily appease him, by shewing
 them to his eternal Majesty; and finally,
 that he might in the Day of Judgment clear
 himself to the reprobate by reminding them
 of what he had suffered to redeem them, if
 they would have been redeemed. Our Lord
 Jesus remains thus a while with his blessed
 Mother and the beloved Disciples, talking
 with them of the Kingdom of God, while
 they stand listening to his ineffable doc-
 trines, and dwelling on his divine counte-
 nance, in raptures of admiration, joy, and
 love. Observe them standing round him,
 but our blessed Lady close by his side, and
 the *Magdalen* in her usual place, at his sa-
 cred feet. Do you too stand there reve-
 rently, yet at a distance, if perchance your
 humility, compunction, and devotion may
 move his mercy to call you nearer to him.
 At length however our divine Saviour left
 them; telling them that he should thence
 repair to *Galilee*, where again they might

see him: and departing he gave them his blessing. They remained then a while together, still hungering and thirsting after him; not satiated with his presence, though greatly comforted.

CHAP. LXXX.

Our Lord Jesus appears to his Disciples in Galilee.

THE Disciples were no sooner repaired to Galilee, as our Lord had appointed them, than he appeared to them, saying, "All power is given to me in Heaven and Earth: Go ye therefore and teach all nations; BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST: teaching them to believe all those things I have commanded you: and behold I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Matth. xxviii. After this, they all humbly adored him, and remained with him for some time, with great joy and satisfaction. Consider them well, and contemplate the above-mentioned words he spoke to them: for they are full of mystery and heavenly

heavenly consolation. For, First, he shewed them that he is Lord of all things. Secondly, he gave them authority and a command to preach. Thirdly, he taught them the form of baptism. And finally, he encouraged and comforted them, by promising always to be with them to the end of the world. Consider then the sweet and singular joy they receive, and the many great and wonderful tokens of love he shews them; which being done, he farther gave them his blessing and disappeared.

C H A P. LXXXI.

He appears to them again near the Sea of Tiberias.

WHILE the Disciples remained in Galilee, on a certain time, seven of them went out to fish in the sea of Tiberias, and having laboured the whole night, they caught nothing. Here, at the break of day, our Lord appeared again to them, standing on the sea-shore, and asking them if they had taken any fish, they answered him, No. Wherefore he said, Cast the net on the right-side of the boat and you shall find

and find some." They did as he ordered them, and they were not able to draw the net for the multitude of fish. Then John said to Peter, "It is our Lord, our Peter, when he heard it was their Lord, put on his coat, (for he was then naked) and cast himself into the sea to come to him; but the other Disciples came in the boat. When they came to land, they saw hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread, which the Lord had prepared for them. He bid them likewise to bring some of the fish they had taken, and dress them; and he eat with them on the sea-side. And according to his accustomed humility, he ministered to them, he broke the bread and gave it them, and gave them likewise of the fish. The seven Disciples, with great alacrity of spirit, conversed with their Lord, and with all submission and respect eat with him, admiring, with hearts full of joy, the affability of his pleasing countenance. They received from his sacred hands the food he gave them, and with no less abundance and spiritual comfort, replenished their souls, than their bodies. O what a divine and celestial banquet! Consider well every particular, and endeavour to feed thy soul with them. When the refecton was over, our Lord addressing himself to Peter, said, "Dost thou

'thou art more than these?' To whom
Peter replied, 'Lord, thou knowest that I
 love thee.' Wherefore *Christ* said to him,
 'Feed my lambs.' Our Lord repeated
 the same question three times; and at
 every time recommended to him his flock.
 Whence we may see the singular bounty and
 care of our Lord *Jesus*, and especially his
 exceeding charity and love for our souls,
 by his repeated recommendations of them
 to *Peter's* care. After this, he foretells *Pe-*
ter the death he should suffer for his sake;
 saying, 'When thou wast younger, thou
 didst gird thyself, and didst walk where
 thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old,
 thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and an-
 other shall gird thee, and lead thee whither
 thou wilt not.' And this he said to signify
 that by the death of the cross he should glo-
 rify God. After this, *Peter* desired to know
 of our Lord in what manner *John* should
 suffer; and our Lord answered him, saying,
 'So I will have him to remain till I come;
 what is it to thee?' As if he had said, 'I
 will not that he follow me by the way of
 sufferings and passion as thou shalt; but that
 he live to a full and complete age, and end
 his days in peace.' Some of the Disciples
 understood by that saying, that he was ne-
 ver to die, and so *Peter* addressing himself to *Jesus*
 said, 'Lord, when thou shalt come, I will go with thee
 unto Jerusalem, and will minister unto thee.'

After

After these things our Lord disappeared; and returned again, according to his usual custom, to the holy Fathers. The Disciples remained greatly comforted, and returned soon again to *Jerusalem*.

C H A P. LXXXII.

Our Lord Jesus appeared to more than five hundred Disciples together; with something relating to all his apparitions in general.

ST. Paul mentions, that our Lord Jesus; at another time, appeared to above five hundred Disciples gathered together; but where, at what time, or in what manner, is uncertain, it not being registered in Scripture. Yet we may well suppose that it was with his usual meekness, bounty, and charity on his side; and again, with no less joy and comfort to the Disciples than usual on their side. And hitherto have we spoke of our Lord's appearing twelve several times after his Resurrection; having omitted two other apparitions which follow, when we shall treat of his Ascension. But there is mention made only of ten in the Gospel. For it is not written in any place that he
 ever

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ever appeared to his holy Mother; so that it is only piously believed he did. How he appeared to *Joseph of Arimathea*, is written in the apocryphal gospel of *Nicodemus*. And his appearing to *James*, *St. Paul* mentions in his Epistle to the Corinthians, as he does likewise that to the five hundred brethren.

We may however devoutly suppose that he appeared several other times; for it is very probable that our most bountiful Lord often visited his holy Mother, his beloved Disciples, and *St. Mary Magdalen*, comforting those in a special manner who had suffered and been most afflicted at his bitter Death and Passion. And this seems to be the opinion of *St. Augustin*, when, speaking of the time of the Resurrection, he says, 'All things relating to our Lord's appearing after his Resurrection are not written; for he conversed often with them!' And tis not improbable that the holy Fathers, and chiefly *Abraham* and *David*, (to whom the Lord made a special promise of the incarnation of his Son) came in company with him to see the most excellent Virgin, his Daughter, and God's most blessed Mother, who for them and for all others had found so much grace, and bore the Saviour of the World. O with what joy and comfort did they behold her! With what reverence did

G g g

they

they incline to her; and with what alacrity did they praise and honour her.

And here may we consider the great benignity, and charity, and the profound meekness of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* in this, that after his Resurrection, and the glorious Victory he had gained for us, he would not presently leave us and ascend into his glory, but, as a pilgrim yet on earth, would remain forty days, and be conversant among us, to confirm and strengthen his Apostles in their faith. This he might have done by his angels, but such was his unspeakable charity, that he would do it himself, by personally conversing with us for the space of forty days, appearing to his Apostles, and preaching to them of the Kingdom of Heaven. All this hath our most merciful Lord done for us, and yet we reflect little on it. He hath always loved us, and still loves us; but yet such is our ingratitude, that we return him not our love for his; which is a mark of great unthankfulness in us towards him, notwithstanding the unbounded charity he still has for us.

With what joy and comfort did they behold him! With what joy and comfort did they behold him! With what joy and comfort did they behold him!

they incline to her; and with what alacrity did they praise and honour her! And here may we consider the great benignity, and charity, and the profound meekness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in this, that after his Resurrection, and the glorious Victory he had gained for us, he would not presently leave us and ascend into his glory, but as a pilgrim yet on earth, would remain forty days, and be conversant among us, to comfort and strengthen his Apostles in their labours. This he might have done by his angels, but such was his unpeakable charity, that he would do it himself, by personally conversing with us for the space of forty days, appearing to his Apostles, and preaching to them of the Kingdom of Heaven. All this hath our most merciful Lord done for us, and yet we reflect little on it. He hath always loved us, and still loves us; but yet such is our ingratitude, that we return him not our love for his; which is a mark of great unthankfulness in us towards him; notwithstanding the unbounded charity he still has for us.



THE ASCENSION.

C H A P. LXXXIII.

The glorious Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TOUCHING the wonderful Ascension of our Lord *Jesus*, it behoves thee, pious reader, to awaken thy heart, and to render thyself more than ordinarily attentive to all that is here said or done relating to this subject, if thou desire to feed thy soul with heavenly comfort, and reap the spiritual unction which plentifully flows from the devout contemplation of so divine a subject.

On the fortieth day after the Resurrection our Lord *Jesus*, knowing that his time was now come to depart from this world and to pass hence to his Father, taking with him the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, and others, who after his Resurrection were in the terrestrial Paradise, and blessing *Enoch* and *Elias*, who remain there still alive, he came to his Apostles who were gathered together on *Mount Sion*, which was the place where he made his Last Supper the night before his Passion: there was likewise with the Apostles at this place, the blessed Virgin, and many other Disciples; and our Lord appearing to them, said, that he would eat with them be-

fore he departed from them, as a special to-
 ken and memorial of the love he bore them.
 And as they were all eating, being full of
 joy and spiritual comfort at this last refecti-
 on of our Lord *Jesus*, he said to them, 'The
 time is now come in which I must return
 again to him that sent me; but you shall
 remain in the city till you are clothed with
 the virtue descending from above; for
 within a few days you shall be filled with
 the Holy Ghost, as I before promised you.
 After which you shall be dispersed through-
 out the whole world to preach my Gospel,
 baptizing all that shall believe in me, so
 that you shall be my witnesses to the ut-
 most confines of the earth.' He likewise
 reproved them for their incredulity in not
 believing them who had seen him rise; (that
 is the Angels.) This he chose to do at the
 time he was speaking to them of preaching
 his Gospel, to give them to understand, that
 they ought to have believed the Angels, even
 before they saw him, much sooner than they
 ought to be believed by those to whom they
 were to preach, who, nevertheless, would
 believe them (the Apostles) though they
 should not see him (*Jesus Christ*). And
 this he did, that by knowing their fault they
 might remain humble; showing them at his
 departure, how much he admired that vir-
 tue,

and that he recommended it to them in a singular manner. They asked him concerning many things that were to come to pass; but he would not resolve them, so much as it was not necessary for them to know the secrets of God, which his Father had reserved in his own power to fulfil at his own will and pleasure. And thus they continued discoursing and eating together, with great comfort and satisfaction, occasioned by the presence of their Lord; yet their comfort was mixed with some grief, by reason of his near departure from them. For they loved him so tenderly, that they could not bear him speak of leaving them without heaviness and sorrow.

And what can we think of his blessed Mother? May we not devoutly imagine that, sitting near him, and hearing what he said concerning his departure, she was moved with the tenderness of her motherly affection; and that brimful of grief, which suddenly seized, and oppressed her blessed soul, she inclined her head towards him, and rested it, upon his sacred breast! For if John the Evangelist at the Last Supper took this freedom, with much more reason may we suppose her to do the same on this doleful occasion. Hence then, with tears and deepest sighs, she spoke to him in this manner:

My heart is troubled, because I have not seen thee here.

His

my dearly beloved Son, I beseech thee
 sometime leave me; but if thou must depart
 and return again to thy heavenly Father,
 strike me, thy afflicted Mother, along with
 thee. But our blessed Lord endeavored
 to comfort her, and said, Grieve not, Oh
 beloved parent, at my leaving you, be-
 cause I go to my Father, and it is expe-
 dient that you remain here a short time
 longer, to confirm in their faith such as
 shall be converted and believe in me, and
 after I will come again, and take you with
 me, to be a partaker of my glory. To
 which again our Lady replied, My beloved
 Son, may thy will always be fulfilled in all
 things, for I am not only contented to re-
 main here during thy pleasure, but also to
 suffer death for love of those souls, for
 which thou hast so willingly vouchsafed to
 lay down thy life. This he answered, I beseech
 thee, be thou ever mindful of me. Our
 Lord then again comforted her, with the
 Disciples, and Mary Magdalen, saying, Let
 not your hearts be troubled, nor fear ye
 any thing, I will not leave you desolate:
 I go, but will surely return again to you,
 and will remain always with you. At
 length he did thus remove from thence and
 go to Mount Olivet, because from that place
 he would have himself seen in the pre-
 sence of them all: This said, he disappeared.

His

His holy Mother, together with the rest of the company, without any delay, hastened to the said Mount, about a mile distant from Jerusalem, as he had appointed them, where our Lord again soon appeared to them. Behold, on this day we have two different apparitions of our Lord. Thus being altogether, our Lord embraced his holy Mother, and she again embraced him in a most tender manner, taking leave of each other. And the Disciples, *Mary Magdalen*, and the rest falling down to the ground, and weeping with tenderness, kissed his blessed feet, and he, raising them up, embraced all his Apostles most lovingly.

Let us now, pious reader, diligently consider them, and devoutly contemplate all that is here done; and amongst the rest, let us behold the holy Fathers, who being there present, though invisible, joyfully admire, and inwardly praise the blessed Virgin, by whom they received so great a benefit at their salvation. They beheld, with pleasing admiration, the glorious champions, and leaders of God's host, the Apostles, whom our Lord Jesus had chosen, among all others, to conquer and subdue the world, and bring it over to the belief of his holy Doctrine. To what length, when the apostles were all fulfilled and completed, our Lord Jesus

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began gradually to raise himself up before
 them, and to ascend by his own virtue and
 power into Heaven. And then the blessed
 Virgin, with the rest, fell down and de-
 voutly worshipped him. And our Lady
 said, "O my beloved, I beseech thee, to be
 mindful of me." And with this she burst
 forth into tears, not being able to refrain
 when she reflected on his departure, yet was
 she full of inward joy to see her blessed Son
 thus gloriously ascend into Heaven. His
 Disciples also, when they beheld him as-
 cending, said, "Thou knowest, O Lord,
 that we have renounced all things for
 thee; wherefore we beseech thee not to
 forget us, but be ever mindful of us, for
 whom we have forsaken all." Then our
 Lord, lifting up his hands, with serene and
 pleasing aspect, crowned with glory, victo-
 riously ascended into Heaven, but first blef-
 sing them, he said, "Be steadfast, and fight
 courageously, for I shall always be with
 you, even to the end of the world."
 Thus our Lord *Jesus*, all glorious, and
 resplendantly shining, ascended into Heaven,
 triumphantly leading with him the noble
 tribe of holy Fathers, and fulfilling that
 which the Prophet *Micah* had said long
 before of his Ascension; "And their King
 shall pass before them, and the Lord at
 the

"the head of them." So that they all followed him with unspeakable joy, singing canticles of praises and thanksgiving to him for their deliverance from all sorrow, and their entrance into all joy and never-ending felicity.

And *Michael*, the Prince of God's celestial host, going before, carried the joyful tidings of their Lord's ascending, at which the whole heavenly court of celestial spirits came forth to meet their Lord, and with all worship and reverence, they led him with hymns and songs of jubilation, repeating with inexpressible joy, *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Having paid their due reverence to the Lord, and ended the joyful canticles, which related to his glorious Ascension, the Angels and the holy Fathers began to rejoice with each other. And what tongue can express or mind conceive that which passed between them at this happy, truly happy meeting? The blessed spirits first began to congratulate them on their arrival; saying in this manner: 'Ye Princes of God's people, ye are welcome to our eternal habitation; and we rejoice and are glad at your arrival: Ye are all gathered together and wonderfully exalted with our God;

God; *Alleluia*. Therefore rejoice, and sing to him who so gloriously ascendeth to Heaven, and above the Heaven of Heavens; *Alleluia*. To which the holy Fathers again joyfully replied, To you, Princes of God's people; *Alleluia*. Our guardians and helpers; *Alleluia*. Joy and peace forever; *Alleluia*. Let us sing and make mirth to our King and our Saviour; *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*. Now we joyfully enter into the house of our Lord; *Alleluia*. To remain forever in the glorious city of God; *Alleluia*. As sheep of our Lord's pasture we enter his gates; *Alleluia*; with hymns and canticles; *Alleluia*. For the Lord of power is with us; *Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia*. In this manner they sang and rejoiced. For according to the Prophet, "The Lord is ascended in shouts of joy, and the Lord in the sound of a trumpet." Our Lord Jesus ascended visibly for the greater comfort of his Mother and Disciples, that they might see him as far as they could. And behold a cloud received him out of their sight; and in an instant they were present in Heaven. And as the blessed Virgin and the Disciples were looking still up to Heaven, two Angels stood beside

beside them in white garments, who began to comfort them, telling them not to look any longer after his body, which they saw ascend so gloriously into Heaven, for that they should not see him any more in that form till the Day of Judgment, when he should come to judge the quick and the dead. They bid them return into the city again, and there to expect the coming of the Holy Ghost, as he himself had told them. Our blessed Lady spoke to the Angels, desiring them to recommend her to her blessed Son, who, profoundly inclining to her, promised gladly to fulfil her commands. And the Apostles and *Mary Magdalen* recommended themselves in the same manner. After this, the Angels departing, they went, according as they had been appointed into the city, unto *Mount Sion*, and waited there the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord *Jesus*, in company with that blessed tribe of holy souls, opened the gates of Heaven, which for a long space of time had been shut to mankind, and as a victorious conqueror, triumphantly entered in, and joyfully inclining to his Father, said, O holy Father, I return thee thanks for the glorious victory thou hast

forgiveness over all but enemies. Behold,
 O Eternal Father, I here present to thee our
 friends, who till this time have been de-
 tained in banishment and in prison. And
 thus I have promised to my Disciples and
 Brethren, whom I have left in the world,
 to send them the Holy Ghost the Com-
 forter, I beseech thee to fulfil my promise,
 for to thy care and protection I recom-
 mend them. The Father, raising him
 up, placed him on his right hand, and
 said, My blessed Son, to thee all power
 is given in Heaven and Earth; wherefore
 concerning all thou hast asked, dispose
 it and order as shall seem most expedient
 unto thee.

After this the angelical Spirits and holy
 Fathers, who remained all the time pro-
 strate before the throne of the most adorable
 trinity, arose, and, with all reverence, re-
 assumed their Alleluias and spiritual can-
 dles, and sung joyfully to the Lord.
 For if Moses and the children of Israel,
 after they had crossed the Red-sea, sung a
 song to the Lord saying: Let us sing to the
 Lord, &c. And Mary the Prophetess,
 Aaron's Sister, and other women going out
 after her, sung to the Lord with timbrels,
 and with dances, with how much more
 reason

reason should they do it now, after the victory obtained over all their enemies? And when David brought the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, the whole multitude of the children of Israel sang to the Lord, and David played before the Lord on all manner of instruments, on harps, on timbrels, on cornets, on cymbals, and David danced before the Lord with all his might, 2 Kings 6. With how much more reason did they now do it, when present with their Lord, in the perfect enjoyment of so great happiness? And if St. John the Evangelist, as we read in the *Apocalypse*, heard a voice from Heaven of a hundred and forty-four thousand playing on their harps, and singing a new song before the throne of God, and the Lamb, whatever that might represent, I cannot but piously imagine, that it was on this day, more than on any other, fulfilled. They all sing, they all rejoice, and exult with utmost jubilation, and with shouts of mirth they praise and glorify the Lord, so that the whole heavenly Jerusalem echoes with joyful Alleluias, and canticles of mirth were heard throughout every part.

Never

Never from the beginning of time was there ever known so solemn a festivity, nor shall ever be again, till after the last and general Day of Judgment, when all the elect shall meet together in their beautified and glorious bodies.

And therefore this solemn feast of the Ascension, if every circumstance be duly considered, is the greatest of all solemnities. Which we shall find to be true if we briefly consider the rest. The Incarnation of God is a great feast, a day of solemn jubilation to us, but not to him, since he was then confined within the narrow compass of the small inclosure of a virginal womb: His nativity was likewise a great feast and a day of publick rejoicing to us. But he was to be pitied, who was born to so great poverty, suffering, and penury. His death and suffering was a great feast to us, because our sins were then all blotted out; but as he suffered most cruel torments, and a most vile death, it was not to him, nor ought it to be to us a subject of joy. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus was a most solemn festivity both to him and to us, because he appeared as a triumphant conqueror over death, and we remained justified, and in

the opinion of *Sanctus Augustinus*, was a more holy feast than the rest, which may be understood of those which proceeded it. For the day of the Ascension seems still to be more holy and greater than that, for though our Lord rose then from the dead, yet he still remained on earth, the gates of Heaven were not yet opened, nor were the holy Fathers then presented to his Father, which was all fulfilled on the day of his Ascension. And if we consider, whatever God wrought, before this, he wrought to this end, without which, his work would have been imperfect. For Heaven and Earth, with all things in them, were made for man; and man was made only for God, and to enjoy him in his glory: to which glory, no one, though ever so just, could ever attain, after sin till this day. Whence you may, in some measure, comprehend how great and wonderful is this day, which may properly be called the solemn and joyful festivity of our Lord *Jesus*. For on this day was he first seated in glory, in the humanity he had assumed, at the right hand of his Father, and enjoyed a perfect rest from all his labours. of this day This day is also a feast of great joy and glory to the blessed spirits of Heaven; for

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on this day they received a new satisfaction, in the sight of their Lord, whom before they had not seen, under the veil of his sacred humanity. And on this day was begun to be repaired the ruins of their heavenly company, occasioned by the fall of their reprobate brethren, some of whose vacancies were filled up by a glorious number of blessed souls, of Patriarchs, Prophets, and others, who on this day triumphantly entered the heavenly city of *Jerusalem*, and took possession of it as their own right and inheritance. Wherefore as we solemnly celebrate the feast of one Saint or Martyr who departed this life, and entered the glory of Heaven, how much more ought we to do the same for so many thousands who entered together in company with the HOLY OF HOLIES, who is far more worthy all praise, honour and glory, than all the Saints and Angels together.

This day is likewise a feast of special joy to the blessed Virgin, inasmuch as she beheld her blessed Son *Jesus*, perfect God and perfect Man, crowned with Glory and Triumph, ascend victoriously to Heaven.

It is also a feast of joy to us; for on this day was our nature first exalted above the highest Heavens; and had he not ascended

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we could not have received the greatest of all gifts, the Holy Ghost, whom he had promised to send us. Wherefore he said to his Disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete shall not come to you."

St. Bernard saith, in his sermon on this day, that "The glorious feast of the Ascension is the end and accomplishment of all other feasts and solemnities, and a blessed conclusion of the weary pilgrimage of *Jesus Christ* on earth."

Hence then may you gather, pious reader, that this feast is greater and more solemn than all others, and that soul, which earnestly and truly loves our Lord *Jesus*, should on this day lift up his mind more fervently towards Heaven, and endeavour to receive a greater plenitude of spiritual comfort and joy than on all other festivals of the year. For our Lord said to his Disciples, "Truly, if you loved me, you would rejoice and be glad, because I go to the Father." Whence it appears from his own words, that there was no day in Heaven more joyful than this, which lasted till the day of *Pentecost* following; and we may devoutly imagine it to have been kept and solemnized in this manner.

The Ascension of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus*, was about the sixth hour. And although the whole court of Heaven made a general rejoicing in a manner beyond all expression: yet, from the hour of his Ascension to the sixth hour of the next day, we may piously imagine that the Angels more particularly celebrated this joyful festival. And in the same manner, on the second, the Archangels. On the third day, the Virtues. On the fourth day, the Powers. On the fifth, the Principalities. On the sixth, the Dominations. On the seventh, the Thrones. On the eighth, the Cherubims. And on the ninth, the Seraphims; which are the nine orders of holy Angels, who continued their joyful solemnity till the vigil of *Pentecost*; from which time, to the third hour of the day following, which is *Whit-Sunday*, the holy Fathers, with the rest of their blessed company, made the same solemn rejoicings. Thus, during the space of ten days before the descent of the Holy Ghost upon earth, they all continued in an uninterrupted acclamation of praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God, to whom be continued the same by every creature to the end of the world, and forever. *Amen.*

C H A P.

C H A P. LXXXIV.

The coming of the Holy Ghost.

OUR Lord *Jesus* being ascended into Heaven, his blessed Mother, with the Disciples returned to *Jerusalem*, as the Angels had told them, and with great joy and comfort remained there the space of ten days in fervent prayer, expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost.

When the tenth day was come after the Ascension, our Lord *Jesus* said to his Father; 'My beloved Father, the time of grace is near, be mindful, I beseech thee, of the promise I made to my brethren, concerning the Holy Ghost.' To whom the Father: 'My beloved Son, the promise you have made is most grateful in my sight, and I am well pleased it should be performed; and as the time is now come to fulfil it, let the Holy Ghost descend, to replenish and fill them with his grace, to comfort and strengthen them, to instruct and teach them, and bestow on them abundance of all heavenly virtues.'

The Holy Ghost descended then on *Whit-Sunday* in firey-tongues, upon a hundred-and-twenty Disciples, who at that time were gathered together, and filled them with all grace and virtue: By which they were so greatly strengthened and enflamed that they immediately went forth, and began to preach the Gospel throughout the whole world, and in great measure made it subject to their doctrine.

This day is then the feast of love, for as *St. Gregory* saith, 'it is the feast of him who is love itself.' For which reason, he who truly desires to serve God should endeavour in this holy solemnity to be enflamed with love, or at least, to be enkindled with a vehement desire of being so, free from any mixture of the love of this world. For, as *St. Bernard* assures us, 'he is greatly mistaken who thinks to unite Heaven with Earth, the sweet balm of spiritual comfort with the enjoyments of worldly vanities, or the bountiful gifts of the Holy Ghost with the deceitful flatteries of the flesh.'

Let us therefore, devout reader, wholly forsake the fleeting vanities of this world, and purify our hearts from all earthly and vain love to creatures, and lead a life of devo-

devotion and prayer as the Apostles did, expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost. Thus may we hope to be visited by him, as the Apostles were, and to receive all spiritual comfort and grace for our souls.

That we may therefore be able to receive the singular gifts of this divine Spirit, and to attain to that bliss to which our Lord is ascended, and prepared the way for us to follow, let us break off all unnecessary engagements with this wretched world, and take no delight in the foul satisfactions of the flesh, nor feed its unlawful desires, but ever earnestly wish, with the Apostle, to be separated from it. So that through the grace of the divine Paraclete, the holy Ghost, we may faithfully endeavour to follow the example of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in this world, and hereafter to ascend with him into the glorious city of the heavenly *Jerusalem*: Where he, sovereign King, together with the Father, and the holy Ghost, one God in perfect trinity, liveth and reigneth forever world without end. *Amen.*

Let us therefore, devout reader, wholly forsake the vain love of this world, and purify our hearts from all carnality and vain love to creatures, and lead a life of



ST. BONAVENTURE.
OF THE ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS.
A C O U N T
OF HIS LIFE AND DEEDS.
BY JOHN RICE.
LONDON: Printed by J. Smith, in Pall-mall, 1791.

ST. BONAVENTURE, the great light and ornament of the holy Order of St. Francis, for his extraordinary devotion, ardent charity, and eminent skill in sacred Learning, is surnamed The Seraphick Doctor. He was born at Bagnara in Tuscany, in the year 1221, of pious parents, named John of Fidanza and Mary Ricelli. He was christened by the name of John; but afterwards received that of Bonaventura on the following occasion. In the fourth year of his age he fell so dangerously sick that his life was despaired of by the physicians. The mother in excessive grief had recourse to the Almighty physician by earnest prayer; and going into Umbria, cast herself at the feet of St. Francis of Assisi.

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ST. BONAVENTURE.

ST. BONAVENTURE, the great light, and ornament of the holy Order of St. Francis, for his extraordinary devotion, ardent charity, and eminent skill in Sacred Learning, is surnamed The Seraphick Doctor. He was born at Bagnarea in Tuscany, in the year 1221, of pious parents, named John of Fidenza and Mary Ritelli. He was christened by the name of John; but afterwards received that of Bonaventure on the following occasion. In the fourth year of his age he fell so dangerously sick that his life was despaired of by the physicians. The mother in excessive grief had recourse to the Almighty physician by earnest prayer; and going into Umbria, cast herself at the feet of St. Francis of Assisi,

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with many tears, begging his intercession with God for the life of her son. Would Christians address themselves to God with an humble confidence in all their corporal necessities, their afflictions would never fail to be turned into divine blessings. But their neglect of this duty deserves to be chastised by spiritual misfortunes, and often also by temporal disappointments without comfort or remedy. St. Francis was moved to compassion by the tears of the mother, and at his prayer the child recovered so perfect a state of health that he was never known to be sick from that time till the illness of which he died. The glorious Saint, at whose petition God granted this favour, saw himself near the end of his mortal course, and foretelling the graces which the divine goodness prepared for this child, cried out in prophetic rapture: *O buona ventura*; that is, in Italian, *Good luck*. Whence the name of Bonaventura was given our Saint. The devout mother, in gratitude, consecrated her son to God by a vow, and was careful to inspire into him from the cradle, most ardent sentiments of piety, and to inure him betimes to assiduous practices of self-denial, humility, obedience and devotion.

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Life of St. Bonaventure.

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Bonaventure from his infancy entered upon a religious course, and appeared inflamed with the love of God as soon as he was capable of knowing him. His progress in his studies surprized his masters, but that which he made in the science of the Saints, and in the practice of every virtue was far more extraordinary. It was his highest pleasure and joy to hear by how many titles he belonged to God, and he made it his most earnest study and endeavour to devote his heart with his whole strength to the divine service.

In 1243, being twenty-two years of age, he entered into the Order of St. Francis, and received the habit in the province of Rome from the hands of Haymo, an Englishman, at that time general of the Order. St. Bonaventure mentions in his prologue to the life of St. Francis, that he entered this state, and made his vows with extraordinary sentiments of gratitude for the preservation of his life through the intercession of St. Francis, resolving with the greatest ardour to serve God with his whole heart. Shortly after, he was sent to Paris to complete his studies under the celebrated Alexander of Hales, surnamed the *Inextinguishable Doctor*. After his death in 1245, St.

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Bona-

Bonaventura continued his course under
 his successor John of Rochelle. His pene-
 trating genius was poised by the most ex-
 quisite judgment, by which, while he easily
 dived to the bottom of every subtle inquiry,
 he cut off whatever was superfluous, dwel-
 ling only on that knowledge which is use-
 ful and solid, or at least was then necessary
 to unravel the false principles and artful
 sophistry of the adversaries of truth. Thus
 he became a masterly proficient in the scho-
 lastick philosophy, and in the most sublime
 parts of theology. Whilst he referred all
 his studies to the divine honour and his
 own sanctification, he was most careful not
 to lose the end in the means, and suffer his
 application to degenerate into a dissipation
 of mind, and a vicious, idle curiosity.
 This opens an avenue into the heart for
 self-conceit, jealousy, envy, and a total ex-
 tinction of the spirit of prayer, with a
 numberless train of other spiritual evils,
 which day waste the affections of the soul,
 and banish thence the precious fruits of the
 Holy Ghost. To shun those rocks often fa-
 tal to piety, he seemed never to turn his
 attention from God; and by the earnest in-
 vocation of the divine light in the begin-
 ning of every action, and holy aspirations

with

with which he accompanied all his studies, he may be said to have made them a continued prayer. When he turned his eyes to his book, they were swimming in tears of love and devotion excited by his assiduous meditation on the wounds of Christ, and his heart still continued to inflame its affections from that its beloved object, which he seemed to read in every line. St. Thomas Aquinas coming one day to pay a visit to our Saint, asked him in what books he had learned his sacred science. St. Bonaventure, pointing to his crucifix before him, said; "This is the source of all my knowledge. I study only Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Not content to make his studies in some sort a continuation of prayer, he devoted entirely to that heavenly exercise the greater part of his time, knowing this to be the key of divine graces and of a spiritual life. For only the spirit of God, as St. Paul teaches, can lead us into the secrets and designs of God, and engrave his holy maxims on our hearts. He alone can make himself known, as no other light can discover the sun to us but its own; and it is in prayer that God communicates himself to us. He here enlightens the souls of his servants, and is their

interiour instructor. But, as St. Austin says, honey cannot be poured into a vessel that is full of wormwood. Neither can this excellent grace or gift of prayer find place in a soul which is not first prepared to receive the sensible presence of the Holy Ghost, by holy compunction, and by the practice of penance, humility and self-denial. These virtues fitted the soul of our Saint to be admitted to the chaste embraces of the heavenly bridegroom. Such was the innocence and purity in which he lived, and so perfect a mastery he had obtained over his passions, that Alexander of Hales used to say of him, that he formed not to have sinned in Adam. This eminent spirit of penance was the principal guardian of this grace of innocence. The austerities of St. Bonaventure were excessive, yet amidst his penitential tears, a remarkable cheerfulness appeared always in his countenance, which resulted from the inward peace of his soul. Himself lays down this maxim, "A spiritual joy is the greatest sign of the divine grace dwelling in a soul." To his mortifications he added the practice of the greatest humiliations. In attending the sick he was particularly ambitious to serve them in the lowest

lowest and most humbling offices. In this charitable duty he seemed prodigal of his own life and health, and chose always to be about those whose distempers were most loathsome, or contagious and dangerous. He had no eyes to see any thing in himself but faults and imperfections, and wonderful was the care with which he endeavoured to conceal from others his extraordinary practices of virtue. When their rays broke through the veil of his humility, and shone forth to others, the Saint, in order to cast a shade over them before men, or at least, to strengthen his own heart against the danger, and to indulge his love of abjection, embraced the greatest humiliations. He always regarded himself as the most ungrateful and the basest of sinners, unworthy to walk upon the earth, or to breathe the air: and these humble sentiments were accompanied with the deepest compunction, and abundant tears. This humility sometimes withheld him from the holy table, notwithstanding the burning desires of his soul to be united daily afresh to the object of his love, and to approach the fountain of grace. But God was pleased by a miracle to overcome his fears, and to recompence his humility. Several days had
 "passed,"

"passed," say the acts of his canonization;
"nor durst he yet presume to present him-
self at the heavenly banquet. But whilst
he was hearing mass, and meditating on
the passion of Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
to crown his humility and love, put into
his mouth, by the ministry of an angel,
part of the consecrated host, taken from
the hand of the priest." By this precious
favour his soul was drowned in a torrent of
pure delights; and from that time he was
encouraged to approach with an humble
confidence to the bread of angels which
gives life and strength. From this time
his communions were accompanied with
overflowing sweetness and consolations, and
with raptures of divine joy and love. If in
our communions we seem to receive, in-
stead of torrents, scarce a small portion of
heavenly grace, the reason is, because our
hearts are too narrow. The vessel which
we bring is too small. If we dilated our
souls by humility, burning desires and love,
we should receive like the Saints an abun-
dant supply of those living waters. So.
Bonaventure prepared himself to receive
the holy order of priesthood by long fasts,
humiliations and fervent prayer, that he
might obtain in it an abundant measure of
graces

graces proportioned to so high a function. He considered that sacred dignity with fear and trembling, and the higher and more incomprehensible it appeared to him, so much the more did he humble himself when he saw himself invested with it. As often as he approached the altar, the profound annihilation of himself, and the tender love with which he offered, beheld in his hands, and received into his breast, the Lamb without spot, appeared by his tears, and his whole exterior. A devout prayer which he composed for his own use after mass, beginning with these words, *Transfige, dulcissime Domine*, is recommended by the church to all priests on that most solemn occasion.

Bonaventure looked upon himself as called by the obligations of his priestly character to labour for the salvation of his neighbour, and to this he devoted himself with extraordinary zeal. He announced the word of God to the people with an energy and unction which kindled a flame in the hearts of those that heard him: every thing was inflamed that came from his mouth. For an assistance to himself in this function he compiled his treatise called *Pharetra*, consisting of animated sentiments gathered

gathered from the writings of the fathers. In the mean time he was employed in teaching privately in his own convent, till he succeeded his late master John Rochelle in a publick chair of the university. The age required by the statutes for this professorship was thirty-five, whereas the Saint was only thirty-three years old; but his abilities amply supplied that defect, and on this literary theatre he soon displayed them to the admiration of the whole church. He continued always to study at the foot of the crucifix. The disagreement between the university and the regulars being terminated by pope Alexander IV. in 1256, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure were invited to take the doctor's cap together. As others contend for precedence, the two Saints had a vehement contest of humility, each endeavouring to yield the first place to the other. They knew no pretexts of the interest of their Orders, nor were they sensible of any prerogatives but those of humility. St. Bonaventure prayed and intreated him with so much earnestness, that at length St. Thomas acquiesced to receive the degree first, and our Saint triumphed over both his friend and himself. The holy king St. Lewis honoured St. Bonaventure with

with his particular esteem, invited him often to his own table, and consulted him in his most intricate concerns, placing an entire confidence in his advice. He engaged him to compile an office of the passion of Christ for his use. St. Bonaventure drew up a rule for St. Isabella, the king's sister, and for her nunnery of mitigated Clares at Long-Champs. His book *On the government of the Soul*, his *Meditations* for every day in the week, and most of his other lesser tracts were written to satisfy the requests of several devout persons of the court. The unction which every word breathes in the writings of this holy doctor pierces the heart, and his concise expression is an abyss, or rather a treasure of most profound sentiments of humility, compunction, love and devotion, the riches of which a pious heart finds every-where boundless. Especially his tender sentiments of the love of God, and on the sacred passion of Christ, exceedingly recommend to all devout persons his meditations on this latter subject, and express the burning affections with which his pure soul glowed towards that stupendous mystery of infinite love, goodness and mercy, that perfect model of all virtue and sanctity,

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and source of all our good. The celebrated Gerson, the most learned and devout chancellor of Paris, writes of the works of St. Bonaventure, 'Among all the catholick doctors, Eustachius (for so we may translate his name of Bonaventure) seems to me the most proper for conveying light to the understanding, and at the same time warming the heart. In particular his *Breviloquium*, and *Itinerarium* are written with so much force, art and conciseness, that nothing can be beyond them.' In another book he says: 'St. Bonaventure's works seem to me the most proper for the instruction of the faithful. They are solid, safe, pious and devout: and he keeps as far as he can from niceties; not meddling with logical or physical questions which are foreign to the matter in hand. Nor is there any doctrine more sublime, more divine, or more conducive to piety.' Trithemius recommends this doctor's writings in the following words: 'His expressions are full of fire, they no less warm with divine love the hearts of those who read them, than they fill their understanding with the most holy light. His works surpass those of all the doctor's of his time, if

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we consider the spirit of divine love, and of christian devotion that speaks in him. He is profound in few words, penetrating without curiosity, eloquent without vanity: this discourse is inflamed without being bloated. . . . Whoever would be both learned and devout, let him read the works of St. Bonaventure.' This is chiefly to be understood of his spiritual tracts. In these the author discovers every-where a most profound spirit of humility and holy poverty, with a heart perfectly disengaged from all earthly things, and full of the most ardent love of God, and the most tender devotion to the sacred passion of our divine Redeemer. The eternal joys of heaven were the frequent entertainment of his pious soul, and he seems never to have interrupted his ardent sighs after them. He endeavoured by his writings to excite in all others the same fervent desires of our heavenly country. He writes that 'God himself, all the glorious spirits, and the whole family of the eternal King wait for us, and desire that we should be associated to them. And shall not we pant, above all things, to be admitted into their happy company? He would appear amongst them with great

confusion, who had not in this valley of tears continually raised his soul above all things visible to become already, in ardent desire, an inhabitant of those blessed regions.' He clearly shews, that he was not able to express the transports of holy joy that overflowed his soul, as often as he contemplated its future union with God in immortal bliss and uninterrupted love and praise. He revolved in mind the raptures of gratitude and joy in which the blessed spirits behold themselves in the state of security forever, whilst they see so many souls on earth every day overthrown by their spiritual enemies, and so many others lost in hell. He was strongly affected with the thought of the glorious company of millions of angels and saints, all most holy, loving and glorious, adorned each with their distinguishing trophies and graces: in which every one will possess in others every gift which he hath not, and all those gifts which himself hath, doubled so many times as he hath partners in bliss. For, loving every companion as himself, he will rejoice for the felicity of each no less than for his own. Whereupon, with St. Anselm, he often asked his own heart, here so poor, so weak, and overwhelmed with miseries, if

if then it would be able, without being strengthened and raised above itself by an extraordinary grace, to contain its joy for its own felicity; how it could be able to contain so many and such excess of joys. But this Saint's sublime sentiments of piety and devotion are best learned from his own works. His love of an interior life did not hinder his application to promote the divine honour in others, by various exterior employments: but these he animated and sanctified by a constant spirit of recollection and prayer.

Whilst he continued to teach at Paris, he was chosen general of his Order in a chapter held in the convent called Ara-Coeli at Rome, in 1256. The Saint was only thirty-five years old. Nevertheless, pope Alexander IV. confirmed the election. St. Bonaventure was thunderstruck at the news, and prostrating himself on the ground, he with many tears implored the divine light and direction. After which he set out immediately for Rome. The Franciscan Order was at that time divided by intestine dissensions, some of the friars being for an inflexible severity, others demanding certain mitigations of the letter of rule. The young general no sooner appeared

peared among them, but by the force of his exhortations which he tempered with mildness and charity, he restored a perfect calm: and all the brethren marched under this new Jesus with one heart, in the same spirit, and in the same path. William of Saint-Amour, a member of the university of Paris, having published a bitter invective against the mendicant Orders, entitled, *On the Dangers of the Latter Times*, St. Thomas answered it. St. Bonaventure also confuted it by a book which he called, *On the Poverty of the Lord Jesus*: in which his mildness in handling the controversy against a most virulent adversary reflected a double advantage on his victory. Our Saint in his return to the schools at Paris visited several of his convents in the way, in which he shewed every-where that he was only become superiour to be the most humble, the most charitable, and the most compassionate of all his brethren, and the servant of his whole order. Notwithstanding his great employments, he never omitted his usual exercises of devotion, but laid out his time and regulated his functions with such wonderful prudence as to find leisure for every thing. He composed several works at Paris, but often retired to

Mante,

Mante, for greater solitude. A stone which he used for his pillow is shewn to this day in that convent. In 1260, the Saint held a general chapter at Narbonne, and in concert with the definitors gave a new form to the old constitutions, added certain new rules, and reduced them all into twelve chapters. At the request of the friars assembled in this chapter, he undertook to write the life of St. Francis; but went first from Narbonne to Mount Alverno, and there assisted at the dedication of a great church. In a little oratory built upon the very place where St. Francis had received the miraculous marks of the wounds of our Saviour, St. Bonaventure continued a long while abstracted, and in an extacy, in holy meditation. He there wrote his incomparable treatise, called, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, or, the Way of the Soul to God, shewing that all her comfort and riches are to be found in God alone, and tracing out the sure way that leads to him. Whilst he was in Italy he gathered the most authentick memoirs for the life of St. Francis, which he compiled with a spirit which shews him to have been filled with all the herosick virtues of his founder whose life he wrote. St. Thomas Aquinas, coming one day to
pay

pay him a visit whilst he was employed in this work, saw him through the door of his cell, raised in contemplation above the ground, and going away said: "Let us leave a Saint to write for a Saint." In 1230, St. Bonaventure assisted at the translation of the relics of St. Antony which was performed at Padua. From that city he went to hold a general chapter at Pisa, in which by words and example he exhorted his brethren to a great love of holy solitude. He gave on that and every other occasion proofs of his tender devotion to the B. Virgin. When he was first made general he put his Order under her special patronage. He regulated many pious exercises of devotion to her, composed his *Mirroure of the Virgin*, setting forth her graces, virtues and prerogatives, with many prayers which are tender and respectful effusions of the heart to implore her intercession. He wrote a pathetick paraphrase in verse of the anthem, *Salve Regina*. He published the praises of the Mother, out of devotion to the Son, and to extend His glory. To propagate his honour and saving faith he sent, by the pope's authority, preachers into many barbarous nations, and lamented his situation that he could
not

not go himself, and expose his life among the infidels.

Pope Clement IV. in 1265, nominated our Saint archbishop of York, being assured how agreeable he would be to that church, to the king of England, and his whole kingdom. But St. Bonaventure having first by earnest prayer begged that God would preserve him from so great a danger, went and cast himself at the feet of his Holiness, and by tears and intreaties extorted from him a discharge from that burden. He held a general chapter at Paris in 1266, and in the next, which he assembled at Assisum, he ordered the triple salutation of the B. Virgin called the *Angelus Domini* to be recited every evening at six o'clock, to honour the incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation, which ought to be the object of our perpetual praises and thanksgiving. In 1272, Theobald, the holy archdeacon of Liege, a native of Placentia, then absent in the Holy Land, was chosen pope, and took the name of Gregory X. a person of such eminent sanctity that a process has been set on foot for his canonization; and Benedict XIV. in 1745, ordered his name to be inserted in the Roman martyrology. He was a man of an extraordinary reputa-

tion throughout all his life, for prudence in the conduct of his affairs; for courage, greatness of mind, and contempt of money; for devotion, clemency, and charity to the poor. He died on the tenth of January, 1276, on his return from the council at Abruazzo, in Tuscany, of which city he is the titular patron. Miracles have rendered his name illustrious. Bonaventure fearing this holy pope would compel him to except of some ecclesiastical dignity, left Italy, and went to Paris, where he wrote his *Hexameron* or pious exposition of the creation, or work of six days. He had scarce finished it, when at Whitsuntide he received from the pope a brief by which he was nominated cardinal, and bishop of Albano, one of the six suffragans of Rome. His Holiness added a precept to him to except that double charge without alledging any pretext against it, and immediately to repair to Rome. He sent two nuncios to meet him on the road with the hat and other ensigns of his dignities. They found the Saint reposing on his journey, in a convent of his Order at Migel, four leagues from Florence, and employed in washing the dishes. He desired them to hang the cardinal's hat on the bough of a tree, because he could not decently take it in his hands, and left them to walk

walk in the garden till he had finished his work. Then taking up the hat he went to the nuncios, and paid them the respect due to their character. Gregory X. came from Orvieto to Florence, and there meeting Bonaventure ordained him bishop with his own hands: then ordered him to prepare himself to speak in the general council which he had called to meet at Lyons for the reunion of the Greeks.

The emperor Michael Palæologus had made proposals to pope Clement IV. for an union. Pope Gregory X. zealously pursued this affair. Joseph, patriarch of Constantinople, made a violent opposition, but was obliged by the emperor to retire into a monastery. To bring this affair to a happy conclusion, Gregory X. invited the Greeks to come to the general council which he assembled at Lyons for this very purpose, and also to concert measures for pushing on a war for the recovery of the Holy Land, which the pope promoted with all his might. This was the fourteenth general council, and the second of Lyons. At it were present five hundred bishops, seventy abbots, James king of Arragon, and the ambassadors of the emperor Michael and other Christian princes. St. Thomas

St. Aquin died on the road to this synod. St. Bonaventure accompanied the pope through Milan &c. and arrived at Lyons in November, though the council was only opened on the 7th of May, 1274. Bonaventure sat on the pope's right hand, and first harangued the assembly. Between the second and third sessions he held his last general chapter of his Order, in which he abdicated the office of general. He found leisure to preach, and he established at Lyons a pious confraternity called *Del Consolano*, which he had formerly instituted at Rome. In it pious persons associated themselves in certain daily devotions, under the patronage of the mother of God. The deputies of the Greeks being arrived at Lyons, St. Bonaventure was ordered by the pope to confer with them. They were charmed with his sweetness, and convinced by his reasoning, and they acquiesced in every point. In thanksgiving, the pope sung mass on the feast of St. Peter and Paul, and the gospel was sung first in Latin, then in Greek. After this St. Bonaventure preached on the unity of faith. Then the creed was sung first in Latin, then in Greek, and as a seal of the reunion of the two churches, those words were thrice repeated:

ΚΥΡΕΝΑΙ

21

“ Who

“Who proceedeth from the Father and
by the Son. But in memory of this solemn
function two crosses are placed on the high
altar of the metropolitan church of St. John
at Lyons. St. Bonaventure was taken ill
after this fashion: nevertheless, he assisted
at the fourth, in which the Logothete, or
high chancellor of Constantinople abjured
the schism. But the next day the Saint’s
strength began entirely to fail him, inso-
much that he was no longer able to attend
business. From that time he gave himself
up entirely to his private devotions, and
the constant amiable serenity of his counte-
nance demonstrated the holy peace and joy
of his soul in those most awful moments.
The pope himself gave him extreme unction,
as is attested by an inscription which
was preserved in the same chamber in which
he died, to our times. The Saint kept his
eyes constantly fixed on a crucifix, and ex-
pired in great tranquility on the 15th of
July, in the year 1274, of his age the 53d.
The pope and the whole council solemnized
his obsequies on the same day in the church
of the Franciscans at Lyons. Peter of Fa-
rense, a Dominican monk, cardinal and bi-
shop of Ostia, afterwards pope under the
name of Innocent V. preached his funeral
panegy-

panegyrick, in which he said: "No one
 ever beheld him who did not conceive a
 great esteem and affection for him: and
 even strangers, by hearing him speak,
 were desirous to follow his counsel and
 advice. For he was gentle, affable, hum-
 ble, pleasing to all, compassionate, pru-
 dent, chaste, and adorned with all vir-
 tues."

The body of St. Bonaventure was tran-
 slated into the new church of the Francis-
 cans on the 14th of March, 1434. King
 Charles VIII. founded their new convent
 at Lyons at the foot of the castle of Pierre
 Incise, in 1494, with a rich chapel in which
 the Saint's remains were enshrined, except
 a part of the lower jaw which that king
 caused to be conveyed to Fontainebleau, and
 it is now in the church of the Cordeliers in
 Paris: the bones of an arm are kept at Bag-
 narea, and a little bone at Venice. In 1562,
 the Calvinists plundered his shrine, burnt
 his relicks in the market-place, and scat-
 tered the ashes in the river Saone, as is re-
 lated by the learned Jesuit Possevinus, who
 was then at Lyons. They stabbed to death
 the guardian with a catholic captain whom
 they had made prisoner; they burnt the
 archives of the library, and set fire to the
 convent.

convent. The Saint's head and some other relicks escaped the fury of the rebels by having been concealed. St. Bonaventure was canonized by Sixtus IV. in 1484. Sixtus V. enrolled his name among the doctors of the church, in the same manner as Pius V. had done that of St. Thomas Aquinas. The acts of his canonization record several approved miracles wrought by his intercession. The city of Lyons, in 1628, being grievously afflicted with the plague, the raging distemper began to cease from the time in which certain relicks of our Saint were devoutly carried in procession. That and other cities have experienced the divine mercy in like manner, in several other publick calamities, by invoking St. Bonaventure's intercession. Charles of Orleans, father of Lewis XII. king of France, was taken prisoner by the English in the battle of Agincourt, in 1425. During his captivity he fell ill of a fever, under which no human remedies gave him any relief. The more desperate his situation appeared, with the more earnestness he set himself to implore the patronage of St. Bonaventure, and a perfect recovery was the recompence of his devotion. In gratitude, so soon as he was set at liberty, he went to Lyons to offer

offer up his thanksgivings and prayers at the tomb of the Saint, on which he bestowed magnificent presents.

St. Bonaventure, this great master of a spiritual life, places not the perfection of christian virtue so much in the more heroic exercises of a religious state, as in the performing well our ordinary actions. "The best perfection of a religious man, (says he) is to do common things in a perfect manner. A constant fidelity in small things is a great and heroic virtue." It is a continual crucifixion of self-love and all the passions; a complete sacrifice of all our actions, moments and affections, and the entire reign of God's grace throughout our whole lives.

T H E E N D.



